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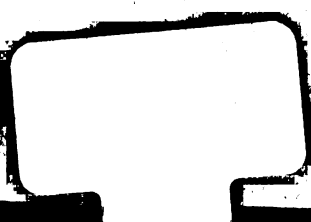


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S E R M O N S

ON

THE PRINCIPLES

UPON WHICH

THE REFORMATION

OF THE

CHURCH OF ENGLAND WAS ESTABLISHED;

PREACHED BEFORE THE

UNIVERSITY OF OXFORD,

IN THE YEAR 1796,

AT THE

L E C T U R E

FOUNDED BY

The late Rev. JOHN BAMPTON, M.A.

CANON OF SALISBURY.

By ROBERT GRAY, M.A.

LATE OF ST. MARY HALL, AND VICAR OF FARINGDON, BERKS.

SOLD BY MESSRS. RIVINGTONS, ST. PAUL'S CHURCH-YARD;

MR. ROBSON, NEW BOND-STREET, LONDON;

AND BY MR. COOKE, AND MESSRS. FLETCHER AND HANWELL,
OXFORD.

1796.

IMPRIMATUR,

WAD. COLL.
Maii 13, 1796

JOHAN. WILLS,
Vice-CAN. OXON.

18433-



TO
THE RIGHT REVEREND
AND REVEREND
THE HEADS OF COLLEGES
IN THE
UNIVERSITY OF OXFORD,
THE
FOLLOWING SERMONS,
PREACHED BY THEIR APPOINTMENT,
ARE MOST RESPECTFULLY
INSCRIBED.

18433-

ROY WAIN
OLIVER
VIA RAIL

E X T R A C T

FROM THE

LAST WILL AND TESTAMENT

OF THE LATE

REV. JOHN BAMPTON,

CANON OF SALISBURY,

——“ I give and bequeath my Lands and
“ Estates to the Chancellor, Masters, and
“ Scholars of the Univerſity of Oxford for
“ ever, to have and to hold all and ſingular
“ the ſaid Lands or Eſtates upon truſt, and to
“ the intents and purpoſes hereinafter men-
“ tioned; that is to ſay, I will and appoint
“ that the Vice-Chancellor of the Univerſity
“ of Oxford for the time being ſhall take and
“ receive

“ receive all the rents, issues, and profits
 “ thereof, and (after all taxes, reparations
 “ and necessary deductions made) that he
 “ pay all the remainder to the endowment
 “ of eight Divinity Lecture Sermons, to be
 “ established for ever in the said Univer-
 “ sity, and to be performed in the manner
 “ following :

“ I direct and appoint, that, upon the first
 “ Tuesday in Easter Term, a Lecturer be
 “ yearly chosen by the Heads of Colleges
 “ only, and by no others, in the room ad-
 “ joining to the Printing-House, between
 “ the hours of ten in the morning and two
 “ in the afternoon, to preach eight Divinity
 “ Lecture Sermons, the year following, at St.
 “ Mary's in Oxford, between the commence-
 “ ment of the last month in Lent Term, and
 “ the end of the third week in Act Term.

“ Also I direct and appoint, that the eight
 “ Divinity Lecture Sermons shall be preached
 “ upon either of the following subjects—to
 “ confirm and establish the Christian Faith,
 “ and

“ and to confute all heretics and schismatics
“ —upon the divine authority of the Holy
“ Scriptures—upon the authority of the
“ writings of the primitive Fathers, as to
“ the faith and practice of the primitive
“ Church—upon the Divinity of our Lord
“ and Saviour Jesus Christ—upon the Di-
“ vinity of the Holy Ghost—upon the Ar-
“ ticles of the Christian Faith, as compre-
“ hended in the Apostles’ and Nicene
“ Creeds.

“ Also I direct, that thirty copies of the
“ eight Divinity Lecture Sermons shall be
“ always printed, within two months after
“ they are preached, and one copy shall be
“ given to the Chancellor of the University,
“ and one copy to the Head of every Col-
“ lege, and one copy to the Mayor of the
“ city of Oxford, and one copy to be put
“ into the Bodleian Library; and the ex-
“ pence of printing them shall be paid out
“ of the revenue of the Land or Estates given
“ for establishing the Divinity Lecture Ser-
“ mons; and the Preacher shall not be paid,
“ nor

“ nor be entitled to the revenue, before they
“ are printed.

“ Also I direct and appoint, that no per-
“ son shall be qualified to preach the Divi-
“ nity Lecture Sermons, unless he hath taken
“ the Degree of Master of Arts at least, in
“ one of the two Universities of Oxford or
“ Cambridge; and that the same person
“ shall never preach the Divinity Lecture
“ Sermons twice.”

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S E R M O N I.

JOHN iii. 19.

And this is the Condemnation, that Light is come into the World, and Men loved Darkneſs rather than Light, becauſe their Deeds were Evil.

IN deſcription of the character and progreſs of religion, as connected with the hiſtory of mankind, it has been a ſubject of complaint, that its influence hath been inadequate to the grandeur of its diſpenſation, if not inconſiſtent with the benevolence of its deſign. The complaint, if ingenuous, muſt originate from haſty and confined views of the real intention and effects of religion; or from inattention to the obſtacles invariably excited by the corruption of thoſe beings to whom it hath been addreſſed.

B

Revelation,

Revelation, contemplated in its first dawn, opens but to disclose the ruins of a fallen nature, and the triumph of a malignant power. The enmity of that evil, of which the sacred writers describe the origin, domineered with such ascendancy and vigour, that the Spirit of God, like the Angel who wrestled with Jacob, appeared but to struggle with the corruption of the flesh. When that corruption had vitiated "every imagination of the thoughts of man's heart to only evil continually," no inconsiderable effect of the partial communications which continued the shadow of that glory which dwelt in Paradise, was displayed in the transmitted lustre of the patriarchal line; and the vigour of that faith is not lightly to be esteemed, which embraced with full assurance promises "seen afar off," and looked to an heavenly recompense; which in successive instances obtained a testimony of praise from God, and is celebrated by the Apostle, as exhibiting examples worthy to be revered of the Christian world.

Revelation obtained its first object, as it marked out the foundations of that oecconomy by which the Almighty vindicated his claim to human worship, and deposed the platform
of

of his Church, by the separation of his servants; who, as they multiplied into "a nation of Priests," preserved at least with fidelity the records of his instructions, and illustrated the excellency of his judgments.

The prophets and holy men, who were employed to censure with indignant zeal the effects of the corruption which counteracted the force of their teaching, painted in strong and heightened colours the obstinacy of that evil, which could reject the precepts of inspired wisdom; and aggravated in striking representation, manners which accorded but seldom with the requisitions of a Divine law. In condemning however the perverseness which inclined to surrounding idolatry, they have still preserved the memory of a city once filled with righteousness*, and of reserved thousands, whose lips in flagitious times had been employed only to utter the praises of exalted piety to the true God†. Their exhortations and accomplished threats finally effected a rejection of Pagan errors, and a devotion to God's exclusive service‡; and

* Isaiah, chap. i. ver. 21.

† 1 Kings, chap. xix. ver. 18.

‡ The Jews, after the Babylonish Captivity, were thoroughly weaned from idolatry; and when they adhered to the precepts

and the dispensation which they imparted, while it served to convince mankind of sin, and sketched out the figures of a more perfect scheme, had fulfilled its appointed purpose, when it ratified the pretensions of that Redeemer who was to "bruise the head" of the tempter to evil, and finally to defeat every effort of his malevolence.

After the preparatory institutions of the Hebrew covenant had vanished in the perfection of the Gospel, the genuine effects of religion were displayed in the entire and admirable renovation of the human character, through successive generations baptized into a Church every where unfolding its everlasting doors, and receiving its mem-

precepts of religion, they exhibited virtues which the most contemptuous hatred unwillingly admitted. Tacitus, who, in treating of the Jews, betrays certainly a great want of candour and information, speaks of the "determined faith and ready compassion for each other," for which, notwithstanding their hatred to the rest of mankind, they were distinguished. Gibbon represents the statement of the Historian as too favourable; but from his own seeming censure we collect that "neither the violence of Antiochus, nor the arts of Herod, nor the example of the circumjacent nations, could ever persuade the Jews to associate with the institutions of Moses the elegant mythology of the Greeks." See *Decline and Fall*, ch. xv. The Mosaic dispensation abounded with precepts of benevolence; and the conduct of the Jews was not defective in charity to strangers. A desire to shun the contagious influence of idolatry, was the principal and meritorious cause of their aversion to other nations. See Lightfoot on Acts x. ver. 28.

bers

bers from a converted and repentant world. The hatred incurred by those, whose righteousness upbraided the lovers of darkness, deprived the followers of the Cross of many testimonies which they merited *. Still, however, from unsuspected and reluctant evidence †, it is unquestionable, that the most sublime and irreproachable conduct was manifested by the early Disciples and Confessors of the Christian faith; whose lives were consecrated to the service, and whose deaths bore attestation to the integrity of virtues, which expiring Paganism vainly laboured to adopt and emulate ‡.

Fatal as was the change effected in succeeding times of ignorance and of violence, the salutary influence of religion was diffused wherever its character was understood. Those who profited most by its laws were not however distinguished in the rude contests and tumultuous scenes which were exposed to public regard, and became the subject of

* O vetustatis silentis obsoleta oblivio!

Invidentur ista nobis, fama et ipsa extinguitur.

Chartulas blasphemus olim nam fatelles abstulit.

Prudent. Hymn. i. v. 73, 75.

† Plin. l. x. Ep. 97. Julian. Epist. 49. Lucian. in Peregrin.

‡ Vid. Julian. Epist. Gregor. Nazian. Orat. iii. p. 101.

the historian's pen: The effects of Christianity are inscribed on humble monuments. Its unassuming virtues have been forgotten, where the misconduct of its professors has been registered with resentful memory. Its operation is to be experienced, and not proclaimed; is to be perceived in the direction of well-regulated affections; in cheerful fortitude; in the humility of self-abasement; in the unwritten deeds of secret charity; in the animation of holy sentiment; in the speculations of benevolence which hath not transpired*.

Whatever of religious control softened the force of passions which raged in these unhappy times; whatever of true wisdom is to be found in the writings, or was transcribed in the lives of those who bewailed the prevailing evils, Christianity may justly claim; and the zeal for truth evinced by

* "Christianity," says Jortin, after a strong and rapid statement of its defaced character "at the very worst, and under the worst of times, could not lose all her excellence, and undoubtedly produced good effects in thousands and ten thousands, whose lives are not recorded in Ecclesiastical History; which, like other history, is for the most part a register of the vices, the follies, and the quarrels of those who made a figure and a noise in the world." *Remarks on Eccles. Hist. Vol. II. p. 338. Newton on the Prophecies, Vol. III. p. 147—197.*

those

those who withdrew and separated themselves from the delusions of the Romish faith, and were exposed to the intolerant bigotry of its resentment, must also be attributed to the suggestions of revealed knowledge. Such were earnest in their representations for reform, in proportion to their acquaintance with the Scriptures, bearing testimony to the truth, as witnesses and disciples of the faith, which fled from persecution to places prepared of God *.

As those however who should judge of the importance of that glorious luminary, which with apparent majesty ruleth over the natural world, from the transient display of its cheerful beams; without considering it as the centre of a stupendous system; the perennial source of light; the operating and energetic power that affects and modifies every part of creation; so should we form a very

* Revelations ch. xii. The following Provençal verses, composed on the Vaudois in 1100, shew their reputation for strictness of manners :

Que non volia maudir, ne jura, ne mentir,
N'occir, ne avourrar, ne prene de altrui,
Ne s'avengear deli suo enemi,
Los dison qu' es Vaudes & los feson morir.

Voltaire, Hist. Univer. ch. 69.

B 4

inadequate

inadequate and partial estimate of the effects of Christianity, if, confining our admiration to the visible burst of its rays, we should not reflect on its power over every dependency of the intellectual world ; its efficacy pervading every secret vein of thought ; its instructions meliorating, often by imperceptible degrees, the laws, literature, and manners of every country, which in the revolution of successive ages it hath visited.

The communication of a perfect law, which every mind, in proportion as it is enlarged, venerates with increasing admiration and improvement, could not be promulgated but with beneficial effect to the world. To enquire wherefore its glory hath not been displayed with universal and equal lustre ; why either it hath not risen on some lands, or hath set with too speedy decline, is to enquire wherefore God hath harmonized the spiritual as well as the natural world with gradations of position, with unequal extent of favour. That where it hath spread it hath imparted blessings, cannot be disputed. The passions and perverse inclinations of men may often hurry them to act inconsistently with the suggestions of their own conscience ;
but

but in general the propriety of their conduct must depend upon the integrity of the principles implanted in their minds.

We are not surpris'd that the Heathens should have "committed all iniquity with "greediness," when we reflect on the springs and motives of their actions. Their temples were the sanctuaries of impurity*: whatever of elegance was diffused over the fanciful objects of their mythology, or their institutions

* The licentious character of the Heathen theology has been exposed till we are weary of the theme; and more detestable features of Paganism might easily be produced. Its worship was often sanguinary, and its deities are not too strongly described by Clemens Alexandrinus, as *μισανθρωποι Δαιμόνες, καὶ οὐχὶ μοῖραν ἐπιχαιρόντες τῇ φρενοβλαδίᾳ τῶν ἀνθρώπων, προσὲ καὶ ἀνθρωποκτονίας ἀπολαυοῖτες*. Of the savage nature of the Gentile superstitions he produces many striking proofs, describing its deities as visiting nations and cities like pestilences. Vide Cohort. ad Gent. § 3. p. 36. Edit. Potter. Vid. also Justin Martyr, Theophilus, and Lactantius de falsa Religione. Those who consider how general and deep were the impressions of Polytheism, and how much the Christians were condemned for despising them, will not think, with Gibbon, that the Fathers "exposed its extravagance with superfluous wit and eloquence." The evidence from prophecy and miracles, now so justly insisted on, would have been urged with less effect, while false prophecies and miracles, and descending deities, were universally believed; and it was necessary to prepare the mind for the pure and sublime morality of the Gospel, by first awakening it to the false glare and the absurdities of existing superstition. The Historian himself seems often to have been reconciled to the extravagance of Polytheism, and inclined to soften down its institutions into harmless rites; and many other writers, with a refinement of philosophy,

tutions and ceremonies of religious celebration; served but to disguise their real character with luxuriant and seductive embellishment; and those only could advance towards the perfection of a moral life, who, rejecting the vicious fables of their religion, exerted their industry in retracing the native impressions of the human mind; or in collecting such traditionary fragments of revealed knowledge, as were "graven with an iron pen" on the rocks and rude structures of antiquity, and dispersed in scattered leaves by exiles from that land, in which its instructions were recorded. As however they too generally reasoned from the illusive speculations of human fancy, limited to the contemplation of the human character, they systematically erred from false principles; and those whose noble minds revolted from surrounding scenes, but cherished with pride, and recommended with eloquence, artificial systems, grounded on human motives, and productive of erroneous conduct.

sophy, and an affectation of classical knowledge, have endeavoured to extract from its grossest imagery a secret wisdom; searching amidst the impurities of licentious fable for the most sublime principles of religion, by a chemistry which might be necessary indeed for the enlightened part of mankind, should the infatuation of a relapse into Pagan worship prevail beyond the boundaries of that unhappy country which has been deluded to restore it.

The

The excellency of Revealed Religion, not only as it is a system in which the Divine attributes, and the glories of a spiritual world are gradually disclosed; but as it inculcates principles of religious and moral conduct, universal in their application, and unimpeachable in their character, is established with undisputed evidence. Its efficacy to promote the welfare and happiness of mankind, has been controlled and suppressed by the obstinacy of that repugnance, which, from its affection to evil, has rejected its guidance*; and it has been still more fatally impeded by the perverseness of that iniquity, which hath mutilated its instructions.

With the evil passions of those who have refused to act under the direction of religion, and concealed themselves with conscious guilt from God's presence; however they may have lived in periods and countries in which it was promulgated, we have no concern in a vindication of its tendency, since it never can be represented as essential to Revelation,

* Αδυνατον εν το αγαθον ειναι και καθαρουν της κακίας ο γαρ κοσμος πληρωμα εστι της κακίας. The existence of evil was obvious; the cause unknown to the Heathen World. Παντων δε μεγιστον κακον ανθρωποις τοις πολλοις εφουτον εν ταις ψυχαις ειναι. Plat. de Legibus. l. v.

that

that it should impose conviction, and compel obedience.

The depravity however, which hath rejected Religion, hath often borne, as the Devils, who acknowledged Christ, an unwilling testimony to its worth ; fulfilling the prophecies which it unfolds, and affording a striking contrast to its character, in the unhappy objects, whom it hath harassed. When the Israelites became children of transgression, and inflamed themselves with idols under every green tree, it was to slay the children in the valleys, under the cliffs of the rocks *. And it would be but too obvious to point out an aggravated counterpart of the effects of apostasy in modern times. Not the pride which hath rejected Religion ; not the defection which hath renounced its laws : but that pretended attachment which hath changed its principles, and kindled “ a strange fire on God’s altar,” hath effected the greatest injury ; here hath the malignant spirit displayed his most fatal enmity, and bruised with too successful subtilty the heel of the Messiah.

That speculative and delusive fancies should have been framed on that general

* Isaiah, chap. lvii. ver. 4, 5. See also 2 Kings, chap. xvi. ver. 3. Jeremiah, chap. xxxii. ver. 35.

persuasion,

persuasion, which resulted from a view of the external evidence of a Supreme Being, was but an illustration of the vanity of human reason, left to build its own schemes, and to expose its own futility. But, that any presumptuous folly, or corrupt design, should dare to change the positive laws of acknowledged revelation, indicated the most prodigious excess of human depravity.

While the glory of God's presence was continued among the Israelites, and successive prophets watched over the fidelity of the revelations which they had communicated, it was difficult, if not impossible, for any falsification of the divine laws to pass undetected; and the reverence which the people invariably entertained for the sacred writings, secured their observance of the Mosaic precept, of not "adding unto the word, or of diminishing from it*." The prophet, who uttered even the deceptions of his heart, was punished for the iniquity, to which he was accessory†; and when the roll of God's wrath was burnt, by the daring impiety of the op-

* Deut. chap. iv. ver. 2. Joseph. cont. Apion. l. i.

† Ezek. ch. xiv. ver. 8, 9.

pressor,

pressor, whose ears were offended at its threats, the delegated ministers of the Almighty were commanded to take again another roll, and to renew the denunciations of the divine resentment. Hence it was, that though “Judea, the place of God’s throne, and the place of the soles of his feet, where he dwelt in the midst of the children of Israel,” was “defiled by the carcases of their kings*, in their high places, and in their setting of their threshold by his threshold, and their posts by his posts,” it was not till long after the sacred line was closed, that we hear of the word of God being made of none effect, by the “tradition of the Elders,” and of “the teaching for doctrines the commandments of men.”

The Hebrew Priesthood, supported with ample and defined maintenance by the liberal provision of the law, had no interest to pervert its precepts, with design to profit by the delusion of their nation. The Scribes and the Pharisees, who laboured for pre-eminence by the affectation of superior sanctity, encum-

* Ezekiel, chap. xliii. ver. 7. Kings or Idols. See Leviticus, ch. xxvi. ver. 30. Jeremiah, chap. xvi. ver. 18.

bered

bered the external service enjoined by the written law with traditionary ceremonies and oral precept : solicitous to conceal the inward corruption of their heart, they impressed with the seal of sanctity the formal works of outward observance; interpreted the Scriptures by fallacious exposition; evaded its moral obligations by the pretence of sacred restrictions, and distorted its doctrines in accommodation to worldly interest. Objects of Christ's keenest reproaches, they were exposed with detected pollution to the abhorrence of mankind, and stand recorded for a depravity, darkened with the deepest shades of hypocrisy and guilt.

Of the rejection of the Gospel by the unworthy, Christ foretold the certainty—of the corruption also of the righteous principle—of the false teachers who should arise, with prophetic assurance he spake. With precise declaration likewise did those whom he had instructed foretell of the heresies which the flesh would generate *. With minute delineation did they describe the character of that “man of sin,” or “mystery of iniquity,”

* 1 Cor. chap. xi. ver. 19. Gal. chap. v. ver. 20. 2 Pet. chap. ii. ver. 1.

which

which already worked in the time of the Apostles ; prefigured as opposing and exalting himself above all that is called God, or that is worshipped *.

In considering the effect of those errors, which, though drawn from the sources of human invention, were permitted gradually to intermingle with the doctrines of Revelation, we perceive the most fatal completion of the divine predictions; and mark with regret the change of that law, which went forth with salutary publication to the world. That the stone, which many builders, to their own confusion, rejected, should become a rock of offence to those also who professed to raise their fabric on its foundations, is a subject of fearful reflection. The imagination lingers on the theme with a sorrow proportioned to the folly and perverseness of mankind, anxious fully to ascertain the causes of a delusion so injurious to the essential interests of Christianity.

The retrospect of error is serviceable, where it tends to vindicate the lessons of wisdom. The vicious inclinations of the human heart furnish the sure and unceasing incitements to

* 2 Theſſal. chap. ii. ver. 4—10.

evil,

evil, and the regulations concerted by experience should be respected as bulwarks against their operation. Reason and reflection enrol their maxims with difficulty. Till propitious occasions conspire to favour their exhortations, they may repine in silence, or utter their unheeded counsels. To undervalue their decrees, once confirmed, bespeaks insatuation, or a malignant purpose.

In commendation of the most important measures which perhaps ever were adopted in conformity to the design of religion, it is purposed, in the Discourses which will be delivered under the present appointment, to describe the leading principles which were established by the Reformation in this country; calculated as they were to secure the essential integrity of Christianity, by shielding it from the baneful influence of those passions, which ever will continue to breathe rebellious hostility to its precepts.

A discussion which will exhibit, in a connected view, the chief particulars deposited by Christ as to the nature of his kingdom; the authority delegated to his Ministers; and the promises imparted with regard to the superintendence of his Church, may contribute to demonstrate the fidelity with which his re-

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vealed

vealed laws were respected, on the providential restoration of their written instruction to this country.

If, in order to illustrate the importance of the principles by which the regularity and beauty of true religion were renewed at this auspicious period, we are compelled with unsatisfactory reflection, to advert to those more exorbitant and portentous wanderings of human error, which in the contemplation of a re-established system we lament, it may tend to confirm our admiration of those efforts, which are best appreciated by the evils which they removed. In directing our attention to such deflections from the appointed courses of obedience, we are not to forget that they were attained often by insensible decline and successive gradations. The imagination, hurried on by the force of religious ardour, first misled the judgment, drawing it to devious flights * and eccentric emulation †. The enthusiasm excited by religious objects was calculated to inflame the fancy; and in the excesses of virtue we find somewhat to pardon

* See the account of the rise of the Nicolaitans in Eusebius's Hist. Eccles. l. iii. c. 29.

† See the description of the Therapeutæ in Euseb. lib. ii. c. 17.

at least, if not to admire. In the zeal which ambitiously courted martyrdom, and in the barren toil and austerities of devotion, we discover only an extravagance resulting from sincere impressions.

The error, in many instances of perverted piety, grew out of the becoming practice. It was the convention of charity, and the holy oblation, that led to the perversion of the solemnities of the Eucharist *. It was at the sepulchre of those who had laid down their lives in Christ's cause, that fervent veneration hallowed the rescued relic †, and presented the benevolent offerings in honour of the dead, which superstition continued with conceit of propitiatory atonement for sin ‡. The taper, consecrated by folly, was first lighted to illumine the gloomy retreats, in which the sacred vigils were shrouded from
insult

* The gratulatory offerings of the early Christians at the communion of the feasts of charity, seem to have first occasioned the Eucharist to be considered as a sacrifice. The Gentile converts contributed to increase misconceptions, by retaining their accustomed terms of sacrifice and altar, and applying them to the elements and the table. Vide Irenæ. l. iv. c. 32. Cyprian. de Oper. & Eleemos. &c.

† Basil in 40 Martyr.

‡ In the second century offerings for the dead, in resemblance of a Pagan custom, were presented to the Church and the poor at the expiration of the year, with commemoration of the

insult and persecution *. Penance was set up as a sacramental ordinance †, upon the abuse of penitential discipline; and the elevation and the procession of the Host originated—the one in harmless expression of Christ's exaltation on the cross—the other in the charitable conveyance of the sacred elements to the sick.

These and similar vanities may be ultimately traced to a just principle, striking its deep root, and entwining its fibres with the best affections of the human heart. It is the redundancy of the branch which spreadeth the shade, casting on the deluded votaries of an obstructed faith the discredit only of unconscious error, which still excites, wherever it exists, a commiseration, mingled with resentment against the evil counsellors, who withhold the friendly hand of reform.

the virtues of the defunct, and as expressive of their charitable character. Cyprian. l. iii. Epist. 15, 16. August. Epist. 64. Origen, l. iii. in Job. & Tertull. de Monogamia. So also intercessions made by confessors, suffering in prison for their adherence to the faith, in favour of penitents anxious for reconciliation with the Church, laid the foundation of the errors which afterwards prevailed concerning intercessions of Saints, and the imaginary efficacy of their prayers after death; not very different from that attributed to the influence of the dæmons of antiquity. See Plutarch. de Defect. Oracul.

* Euseb. de Vit. Constant. l. iv. Epiphani. l. iii.

† The Council of Trent attributes the sacramental efficacy of penance to absolution. §. 14. c. 3.

It

It were foreign to our design to mark out the varied productions and progressive shootings of human error, grafted on a strong and vigorous stock, since, unhappily for mankind, that final corruption, which, at the revival of science, excited an irresistible necessity of change, had totally choaked up and destroyed the righteous principle. Confining our attention to the evils as they then existed, we shall endeavour only to represent, by a statement of the laws of Christ, as first established, how grossly they were violated, how faithfully they were restored; to point out with what admirable prudence superstition was discarded, without prejudice to religion; and at a time that indignation was roused by every sense of injury, the discipline, doctrine, and institutions of a true Church were rescued with cautious and reverential piety from the accumulated mass of corruption which had nearly overwhelmed them.

In inviting attention to subjects often produced under every form, it would be consistent with apprehensions which must arise, to deprecate the distaste of learned minds, accustomed to disquisitions of remote and difficult discussion; but at a time when the

lust for novel speculation hath been often known to seduce the mind to a forgetfulness of the most important truths, it has been judged agreeable to the design of this appointment, as well as level with the pursuits of unambitious industry, to review the plain and obvious principles upon which the most essential interests of religion depend.

In the consideration of a theory of general importance, it may be gratifying here to reflect, with peculiar interest, that the first distinguished assertor of religious freedom discovered and taught its earliest truths at this University* ; that his writings awakened the spirit of reformation in other countries † ; and that, when the triumphant cause experienced

* Wickliffe, who was educated at Oxford, preached his doctrines there with such success, that, on the appearance of the Pope's Bull against him, the University deliberated whether or not it should be received ; and his followers increased prodigiously, and were distinguished by their dress. See Wood's *Hist. & Antiquit.* l. i. p. 186, 191, & passim. Walsingham, p. 201. and Baker's *Chronicle*, p. 160. Jerome of Prague professed at the Council of Constance to have seen a testimonial of the University in favour of Wickliffe. Probably that published in 1406.

† John Hus derived his principles of the Reformation from the works of Wickliffe, furnished to him by a Bohemian nobleman, who had resided at Oxford ; and Jerome of Prague, who had visited Oxford, drew his ideas of the Reform from the same source. See Gilpin's *Lives of the Reformers*.

a temporary

a temporary check in these realms, its most eminent advocates evinced in this place the efficacy of the faith, and confirmed its impression by sealing with expiring testimony the confessions of martyrdom in its praise; kindling, as the conviction of undaunted confidence foretold, a light not likely to be extinguished.

In illustration of the real character of Christianity, by a description of its restored sincerity, it is expedient to confine our attention to its features, as exhibited in this country. If, without adverting to the extravagance of subordinate sects, we contemplate the general progress of the Reformation on the Continent, we are compelled by impartial reflection to regret, that the impetuous resentment which swelled against opposing difficulties, and which was perhaps necessary to give energy to the first impulse of reason, often hurried it to a precipitation prejudicial to the interests of truth. The enthusiasm excited at the commencement of an arduous work, operating on the sentiments and prejudices of individual leaders, occasioned the intermixture of some blemishes, which were suffered to disfigure even the permanent institutions of the several Churches which they

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established.

established*. This remark is adopted, not with insidious design to lessen the pretensions of other departments of the Universal Church, but to point out the existence of those favourable circumstances, which, under Divine Providence, conspired to the establishment of pure and apostolic arrangements in our own country.

The enlightened men, whose judicious counsels contributed to the advancement of the Reformation as here perfected, could not behold the agitation and severe contests which prevailed on the Continent, without remarking the inconveniences which tempestuous times and hasty violence had occasioned. Re-
moved

* The vehement and uncharitable spirit of Luther, the yielding softness of Melancthon, and the rude and overbearing harshness of Calvin, should be forgotten, as the defects of illustrious characters. We cannot however but lament the errors which were admitted into the confessions of their faith. In the most authentic edition of the Defence of the Confession of Augsburg, which was drawn up by Melancthon, and which is considered by Mosheim as a part of the chief and most respectable formulary of the Lutheran Church, a true transmutation of the bread into the flesh was admitted, though left out of the subsequent editions. See Hospinian. Hist. Sacram. pars post. p. 199. In the form of concord afterwards drawn up, in the severe tenets and intolerant spirit of the more rigid Lutherans, and adopted by the majority of the Lutheran Churches, the ubiquity and real manducation of the flesh and blood were maintained, and persecution in consequence excited against the favourers of Calvinism, by whom the form
was

moved at a distance from the contending parties, they were enabled to profit by the mistakes, as well of those who clamoured with too eager zeal for innovation, as of those who struggled with tenacious prejudice for inveterate corruptions. Not dazzled by the glare of new opinions, they perceived gradually and distinctly the objects to which reformation should be directed, and accurately discriminated between the original institution and the spurious fancy, the primitive doctrine and the practical abuse. Contemplating the vast pillars on which the Romish Church was supported, and aware that their Sovereign had been the applauded defender of its faith, the friends of truth were not hurried on by any eager expectation of the immediate

was generally and vigorously opposed. Vide Hospinian. Concord. Discors. The defective morality, and the undefined and imperfect discipline of the Lutheran Church, hastily settled in days of controversy and dissension, and the doctrines of absolute Predestination and controlling Grace, so peremptorily asserted by Luther, though disclaimed by most of his followers, are the subjects of regret to its friends. The intolerance, the Erastian principles, and the notion of the Eucharist, as merely a commemorative rite of Zuingli, cannot but be condemned. The extravagance of Carolestadt produced unhappy effects. In Denmark the civil constitution was deranged, by the violent abolition of the episcopal power. The phrenzies of the Antinomians and Anabaptists were extravagantly pernicious. The opinions of the Calvinists concerning absolute decrees, perseverance and justification, and civil and ecclesiastical discipline, are to be lamented as permanent blemishes of their Church.

destruction

destruction of that grievous dominion which had been set up, and perceived that the widely extended influence of a confirmed power could be undermined only by the effect of that "still small voice" which should announce the Divine presence; the preparation of whose approach had already "rent the mountains*."

The first measures of reform, as they originated with the regular powers of government, and not with adventurous individuals, were tempered with discretion, and peaceably modified and secured with lawful provisions. The supremacy of the Papal usurpation was abjured, not only without offence, but in strict obedience to the civil and spiritual authorities. No rude defiance of legitimate claims, no wild contempt of lawful government, no undue concessions to auxiliary powers † were necessary for the furtherance of the projected plan. Not the inflamed passions, but the enlightened understanding was to be addressed; not the fancy, but the

* 1 Kings ch. xix. ver. 12.

† Voltaire asserts, that Luther, with a small Council of Reformers, indulged Philip, the Landgrave of Hesse-Cassel, in a permission of bigamy. See Hist. Univers. ch. 108. The authority is questionable.

judgment

judgment was to be engaged in the advancement of a reasonable and well-deliberated cause.

Never perhaps could there be a time and circumstances more favourable to the slow and restrained adoption of just principles and moderate decrees than this period, when private and political interests * conspired to promote the qualified acceptance of doctrines, prevailing by their intrinsic evidence, and ratified on that basis of truth on which alone they could rest; while opposite parties pleaded with discordant zeal against their establishment. Our Church therefore was confirmed on the most unexceptionable ground, and was demonstrated, not alone by the eloquent representations of its advocates, but by the ingenuous tribute of foreign applause †, to be the glory and bright ornament of the Reformation.

* Henry, by entering into a controversy with Luther, had drawn the attention of his subjects to the disputed points. During the vexatious delay of his application at Rome, he encouraged a discussion of the Papal claims, and endeavoured to intimidate the Pope, by moderating, and in part suspending, the persecution of reputed heresy. Ann Boleyn, his favourite Queen, was naturally provoked to shew her resentment to the power which had obstructed her advancement, and was by principle inclined to favour the Reformers.

† Grotius Epist. ad Boet.

In

In the description of a work, great and extensive as was the Reformation, advancing by progressive stages of improvement, it is not necessary to notice every successive change, or to advert to every effort. Sufficient is it, if, by a representation of its permanent institutions, its general consistency with reason and religion, and the solidity of its principal foundations, be shewn. As, by the magnitude of its object, and the extent of its designs, it involved the various interests, and engaged the collected passions of the nation in its progress, it could not but occasionally exhibit characters of exceptionable cast. Interested men often professed a popular cause, and debased it with prejudicial and unworthy councils. The detected error possessed a lingering influence; the ancient claim was reluctantly resigned. Such were the blemishes of a scheme of human conduct; defects inconsistent with the general spirit of the Reformation, and leaving but few stains. The just principle, though obstructed in its growth, was finally matured. The sincere doctrine, though industriously clouded, was at length cleared. The noble circle of the Confessors and distinguished leaders of the reformed faith, rejects the deformity

formity of these suspected characters, who were attracted by base allurements to espouse the cause. The integrity of the perfected establishment disclaims the discredit of those errors, which were with difficulty removed from the fabric with which they had been long incorporated. In the completion of the work there is much indeed to excite our reverence. Its importance can be estimated by those only who observe its extensive influence over every department of life; who consider it as affecting every interest of the community, domestic and social; as contributing to the advancement of liberal enquiry, moral improvement, civil and religious freedom.

The establishment of just principles must ever be considered as the basis of public and private happiness. “ All the earth calleth
 “ upon the truth, and the heaven blesteth it :
 “ it endureth, and is always strong. With
 “ her there is no accepting of persons or re-
 “ wards ; but she doeth the things that are
 “ just, and refraineth from all unjust and
 “ wicked things ; and all men do well like
 “ of her works, and she is the strength,
 “ kingdom, power, and majesty of all
 “ ages *.” Its permanent characters are re-

* Esdras, chap. iv. ver. 16.

corded

corded only in the pages of revelation, steady and unchangeable, while the theories of fancy and the delusions of falsehood rise but to disperse, flourish, and are forgotten with the vanity which gave them birth.

The doctrines of Christianity are never merely speculative ; nor is any particular disclosed in Scripture, solely to play on the imagination. Every communication is intended to fix the mind to some solid object that calls for reverence, and intimates the precepts of practical observance*. Hence do moral virtues emanate from pure faith, with a lustre and consistency dependent on the vigour of its attention, and the strength of its conviction.

The broad features of human corruption, exhibiting striking though varied aspects in every age, characterise so strongly each period, that religion can no where display its predominant and unclouded character ; and, in contrasting the great outlines of comparison between different ages, we are often

* “ Opinions,” says Bishop Warburton, “ concerning the nature of the Deity, so entirely influence all religious practice, that this invariably takes its character from these, and becomes more or less perfect, as these are nearer to or farther removed from the truth.” See Alliance, p. 60. and Plato’s Eutych.

unable to ascertain the relative superiority. If, however, by a comprehensive estimate of the complicated evils which have counteracted the operation of Christianity, we would ascertain its full effects, it would undoubtedly be found that they have been salutary and important in proportion to the fidelity with which its precepts have been communicated and enforced: not only in great and prominent display, but in general and extensive influence, among all classes and descriptions of men, whether professing reverence for instructions of revelation, or unconsciously adopting what they affect to disregard or oppose *: improved in numberless circumstances, which give perhaps no glow to the colourings of history, though they certainly brighten the views of the times concerned, and contribute to disperse the prejudicial in-

* The members of the Romish Church have undoubtedly perceived the folly of many doctrines professed in their Creed; but as those doctrines are connected with established institutions, favourable circumstances must contribute to their removal. At present their champions shelter themselves under qualifications and subterfuge, disavowed by positive practice and authoritative declarations. Those who, offended by the corruptions of superstition, have been led to overlook the testimonies, and undervalue the importance of religion, have often borrowed its precepts and adopted its principles.

fluence

fluence of that evil, which lours with eternal enmity to the welfare of mankind.

To estimate the importance of Christianity contrasted with superstition—with morality destitute of vital faith—with honour capricious and variable—with philosophy vague and fallacious, it is expedient not so much to contrast different ages, however on such comparison its glorious character might be illustrated, but rather to trace the different advances made under the guidance of human wisdom and divine instruction through similar circumstances; in co-existing states, with equal improvement in science, and correspondent refinement in manners; in different classes of men in the same society; in the circles of individual example.

The light of science and the progress of enquiry have at all times been favourable to Christianity; and there is a degree of civilization congenial to its spirit, and friendly, if not necessary, to its success: but beyond this there is also a corruption in manners, and a conceit of knowledge injurious to its interests, and even proudly contemptuous of its instructions. “The opportunity of leisure” is essential to the attainment of information, and facilitates the deduction of the testimonies

nies of truth ; but the habits of indolence, and the dissipation of thoughtless vacuity, are calculated only to enfeeble and to debase the mind. The sphere of enquiry is extended, and the collections of general industry compared, as intercourse between different countries is enlarged ; but the prosperity of states has too often proved ruinous to the integrity of their character ; and the deductions of learning and sober enquiry are not seldom overlooked by the careless insensibility of the general ranks, or the confident vanity of those who deem themselves enlightened by the diffusion of a superficial knowledge.

The existing state of life and manners presents abundant illustration of the truth of these remarks. At no period, since the right of an uncontrolled freedom of judgment has been asserted, have such bold and extravagant opinions been propagated to perplex mankind ; or the general classes of society been more misled by men, whose vivacity of genius and powers of intellect are employed only on those loose principles and inaccurate notions, which circulate in popular discussion. The reputation for talents, where no solid information exists, is often supported but by

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confident

confident assertion and fanciful argument. Hence it so frequently happens, that men, who have prosecuted none of those studies which are necessary to develope, even the scheme of the external evidence of Christianity, presume, with desultory remark and presumptuous decision, to determine on its proofs. They bring forward perhaps some solitary particular of sceptical invention, or some trivial circumstance of subordinate concern, to invalidate the connected and consistent testimonies of history. They produce some precarious conclusion from philosophical statements, hastily framed and partially considered, to impeach the fidelity of records, which those of the most enlarged minds, who have reasoned from comprehensive research, and from such stores of acquired knowledge, as amidst the habits of modern life are rarely, if ever, attained, have attested with fullest conviction ; such having learnt by profound enquiry and sedate reflection to think diffidently of their own wisdom, and to restrict their reason to objects within the scope of its faculties and the limits of its attainments. By these means, is the authority of religion invalidated on those who are unaccustomed to contemplate the concentered rays of evidence before which

which the objections that occupy the uninstructed mind fade and disappear; and hence is the faith which has no solid reliance surrendered to vague declamation; or distracted with doubts which it cannot disperse, and difficulties which it cannot solve.

The influence of such ascendancy is often likewise employed to "lead captive" its hearers, by confounding the abuses of religion with its genuine instruction; subverting the faith of those who have not learnt to discriminate between the sincerity of the revealed doctrines, and the perverted teaching of false professors; and who forsaking religion because errors have been countenanced by its pretended sanction, but plunge into the unfathomable depths of human folly.

The characters of superstition and of religion are sufficiently distinct, and may easily be understood by those who do not wish to blend their description. Their opposite effects may be fully illustrated from a comparative view of countries illumined by the reformed faith, and those still overshadowed by the clouds of error. In the former, religion may be neglected; but it misleads not in its established decrees, to any practice offensive to God, or injurious to man. In the latter, unpre-

judiced observation must admit, that the public faith is the polluted source and fountain of speculative and practical evil.

Those who would promote the influence of religion, must commend and invigorate the great principles established at the Reformation. Even these principles, it is true, realize not the theoretic perfection of religion, because they contend with the malignity of human corruption. The dispensations of the natural world, which at no time have left God "without a witness," produced but indirect testimonies of reverence, and erroneous expression of worship; and when we lament the want of apparent effects from Revelation, be it remembered, that "this is the condemnation, that light is come into the world, and men loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil."

S E R M O N II.

JOHN xviii. 36.

Jesus answered, My kingdom is not of this world.

THE rejection of earthly power, in the establishment of Christianity, was an eminent and characteristic proof of the Divine origin of that religion. Its great teacher, pleading an heavenly commission, required not the assistance of the human arm. He withdrew from the election of popular favour*, and held back the sword drawn by the zeal of his Disciple†. He professed to lay the foundations only of a spiritual kingdom, aiming at no dominion over the temporal possessions of men‡; and

* John, ch. vi. ver. 15. † Matt. ch. xxvi. ver. 52.

‡ Luke, ch. xii. ver. 13, 14.

declaring, that though he were a king, his object was only, by "bearing witness unto the truth," to establish an ascendancy over the voluntary converts to its evidence.

With such meek and unassuming characters had the Messiah been portrayed in ancient description! "Behold my servant, whom I uphold; mine elect, in whom my soul delighteth. I have put my Spirit upon him: he shall bring forth judgment to the Gentiles. He shall not cry, nor lift up, nor cause his voice to be heard in the street. A bruised reed shall he not break, and the smoking flax shall he not quench*." With correspondent designation was his kingdom also prefigured in prophecy, as a stone "cut out of the mountain without hands," though destined ultimately to fill the earth†.

A dispensation revealed from above, and encircled with the testimonies and radiance of its origin, was not designed to wave on the banners of secular triumph; but was to rest its pretensions on its own evidence, and to depend on the promise of miraculous sup-

* Isaiah, ch. xlii. ver. 1—3.

† Dan. chap. ii. ver. 35, 45.

port. With declared contempt of human strength and greatness, God purposely chose
 “ the foolish things of the world to confound
 “ the wise, and the weak things of the
 “ world to confound the things that were
 “ mighty.” The resistance which his religion encountered, served but to illustrate the irresistible efficacy of the spirit, which
 “ warred not with carnal weapons,” though
 “ mighty through God to the pulling down
 “ of strong holds ;” and the difficulties over which it proved victorious, “ casting down
 “ imaginations, and every high thing that
 “ exalted itself above the knowledge of
 “ God,” but furnished occasion for the display of the heavenly powers by which it was advanced.

From the tenor of these descriptions, and from the invariable representations of Scripture as to the nature of Christ's kingdom, it is evident that it was designed to be a dominion erected on the conviction of mankind. All violent measures were disclaimed, and our Lord appealed only to the works which he performed, and to the Scriptures and witnesses which offered testimony to his pretensions.

To such a kingdom as Christ had received

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from

from the Father, did he also appoint his Disciples; who were to preside over it for administration of his laws, with gradation of order and distinction of office *; as directors of a real society established by an apparent sovereign, with visible representation and external government; but who were not, "as the kings of the earth exercise lordship," to challenge earthly dominion, or to assume earthly power †. Such as aspired to superiority, were to seek it by lowliness; and the differences of order, or conceded pre-eminence which were to subsist between them for the purposes of regularity and concert, were to be rendered subservient to condescension and humility. The authority with

* Ephes. ch. iv. ver. 11, 12. Acts, ch. xx. ver. 28.

† John, ch. xviii. ver. 36. Luke, ch. xxii. ver. 25—29. The texts here considered evidently respect the *exercise* as well as the *derivation* of the spiritual power. The earlier Christians were sensible of the celestial nature of Christ's kingdom. It appears from Eusebius, that some grandsons of that St. Jude who was called, according to the flesh, the brother of Jesus, having, as derived from the race of David, excited the suspicious jealousy of Domitian, shewed, when interrogated concerning Christ, and the nature, time, and place of the appearance of his kingdom, that it was not to be a worldly or earthly, but an heavenly and angelic kingdom; to take place at the consummation of time, when coming in his glory Christ should judge the living and the dead: and by this account the tyrant was induced to put a stop to the persecution which prevailed. Euseb. Eccl. Hist. l. iii. c. 20.

which

which they were invested was entirely spiritual, was to address only the conscience, and to derive all its temporal sanctions from the cheerful concurrence of the faithful.

Commissioned to propose the conditions of eternal remuneration, the preachers of the Gospel derived from Christ no instruction to hold out present allurements, or to denounce present punishment. Whatever deeds of miraculous kindness or severity might eventually characterize their ministry in confirmation of the Word *, of “ silver and gold they had “ none” to distribute, but from such offerings as were voluntarily laid at their feet ; and against the house or city which should refuse to hear their words, they were directed only to “ shake off the dust of their feet, as a testimony against them” of wrath to be treasured up against the day of final judgment†.

All disciples, it is true, who were admitted by baptism into the Church under the Gospel conditions, were pledged to reverence the

* Acts, ch. iii. ver. 6. ch. xiii. ver. 11.

† Matt. ch. x. ver. 14, 15. Mark, ch. vi. ver. 7—11. Acts, ch. xiii. ver. 46, 51. ch. xviii. ver. 4—6.

functions,

functions, and to obey * the just instructions of those who had undertaken a responsible charge. The Ministers of Christ, as appointed ambassadors and expositors of his laws, were upon principles of essential propriety to be regarded as speaking by his authority †. A commission derived from his supremacy, and exercised in conformity to his precepts, could not be rejected but at the peril of incurring his indignation. Of such disobedience indeed the earlier disciples of Christ were not guilty; and we find that, during the ages of primitive discipline, they

* Hebrews, ch. xiii. ver. 17. Tyndal, in his anxiety to annihilate the spiritual jurisdiction, intimates, that *πειθομεν* should be translated "be persuaded by," rather than "obey." The force of the precept is still equally binding. See Rights of Christian Church, ch. iv. p. 161.

† Matt. ch. x. ver. 40. Mark, ch. xiii. ver. 34. Luke, ch. x. ver. 16. ch. xxii. ver. 29. John, ch. xiii. ver. 20. Bishop Hoadley, in his discourse on John, ch. xviii. ver. 36. which gave rise to the Bangorian controversy, making no distinction between the invisible and visible Church, rests his arguments upon the idea, that as Christ is the exclusive lawgiver of his kingdom, no one of his subjects is judge over others; omitting the considerations that every actual society must have actual government; that Christ appointed Ministers to execute his laws: to retain or to remit sins, and to enact regulations, with consent of the Church. To maintain that no new laws of direction are to be enacted, is to adopt the fancy of the Puritans, who respected no discipline but what was laid down in Scripture, and allowed no latitude for the discretionary application of principles, according to the variations of an inconstant world.

paid

paid a cheerful reverence to the Ministry; submitted, where they had offended, to private censure and public rebuke; performed such penitential acts as were enjoined in expressive testimony of contrition, and assented to every regulation which their duly constituted rulers judged to be of expedient and beneficial tendency to the government of the Church.

The pastors however were armed with no coercive authority of present effect, except that of expulsion of disobedient members; and when no miraculous powers were exerted, no temporal control was assumed, even by those who ordained "bishops and deacons in every city *;" and delivered the rule of future succession, directing that the elders who were to feed the

* 1 Tim. ch. iii. Philip. ch. i. ver. 1. Bishops and deacons are mentioned collectively for the Ministry. It may be incidentally remarked, that Clemens Romanus applies the prediction in Isaiah, ch. lx. ver. 17. to bishops and deacons. The word rendered exactors in our translation, is *ἐπισκοποι* in the Septuagint version; and the word *διδασκαλοι* was probably substituted by Clemens, to signify the inferior rulers of the Church, instead of *ἀρχιεπισκοποι*, in accommodation to our Lord's instruction in Matt. ch. xx. ver. 26. In the Christian Church, indeed, all rulers are especially servants; and the application of the prophecy is certainly striking, whether we accept of the reading of Clemens or not. See Hammond, de Episcop. Dissert. iv. The chapter relates to the time of the Messiah; and the Hebrew texts and interpretation countenance the application.

Church

Church of Christ should "take the oversight" thereof, under due appointment indeed, but with consent of the congregation* ; not as "Lords over God's heritage," but as "being enfamples to the flock† ;" as such they were to proclaim the Gospel terms of communion, and to provide for the public worship and external discipline of the Church ; but were not to exceed the limits of their authority by inventing arbitrary laws and conditions of faith ; or by imposing any regimen with temporal sanctions, till confirmed with the usual operation of good government, and regulated in agreement with the deliberate approbation of the society.

The

* Acts, ch. i. ch. vi. ver. 3—5. ch. xiii. ver. 2. *κατασταθέντας ὑπ' αὐτῶν*, that is, by the Apostles and their successors, says Clemens, *συνδοκησασας τῆς ἐκκλησίας πάσης*. Clem. Rom. Ep. i. §. 44. Origen, Hom. in Levit. Concil. Nicæn.

† 1 Peter, ch. v. ver. 3. Matt. ch. xx. ver. 25. The right of the Bishops and Clergy to regulate the discipline of the Church, in spiritual matters affecting the Laity as well as Clergy, appears to have been generally admitted in the primitive ages ; though important laws were usually passed in the presence of, and with consent of the people. See Acts, ch. xv. ver. 22, 23. "Solus rescribere nihil potui," says St. Cyprian (on an application from Donatus), "quando a primordio" "Episcopatus mei statuarim nihil sine consilio vestro & sine consensu plebis, meâ privatim sententiâ gerere." Cyprian, Ep. xiv. vide also Ep. xxx. Edit. Fell. Potter strains upon these passages disingenuously, and to no purpose. It is clear that the Bishops had the proper title to direct ; but they required the presence and

The spiritual jurisdiction of the Church, however it might respect external objects, did not interfere with any just appointments of civil government. The gradations of its Ministry, as marked by no temporal privileges and distinctions, affected no interests of temporal institution. The descriptions which the Gospel held out presented no objects to seduce men from their allegiance to lawful powers. It left them citizens of existing states, and subjects of existing laws. It paid "tribute to whom tribute was due;" and whatever of compulsive support was delegated to the rulers of the Church in aid of that discipline which was essential to its preservation, should have been considered as an emanation from earthly power; not to be employed to the establishment of an independent empire,

and concurrence of the people, over whom they had no compulsive power. See Discourse on Church Government. Amicus Plato, magis amica veritas. The learned Writer overlooks even the *ὡς τῇ ἐκκλησίᾳ* in Acts, ch. xv. ver. 22. and labours with idle criticism and elaborate misrepresentation to subvert the indisputable fact, which at last he is obliged to admit, that in the primitive Church the Presbyters and people were generally consulted in the decrees which respectively affected them. Rogers fairly admits a consent of approbation, though not of authority, in the brethren of the Apostolic Council, mentioned in Acts xv. See Rogers's Review in reply to Sykes. The changing discipline of the Church towards the end of the 4th century departed from the custom, and the Reformation restored it. See Act. Concil. Carthag. in Cyprian. p. 158.

but

but in subjection to the control of secular government.

Constituted upon these principles, the kingdom of Christ, discountenanced or protected by the civil power, was to be submitted to the direction of those who were qualified to superintend its concerns; but who were not authorised to disturb any civil regulations, or to compel the acceptance of their measures by any coercive sanction, till ratified by the approbation of the community. The coercive power which might be requisite to enforce the decrees of ecclesiastical institution, was to be derived from the regulations of a social œconomy; and to be restricted or enlarged in conformity to the decisions of the general sentiment; and should be regarded, not as a sword of the Ministry conveyed by their spiritual commission, but as a legitimate exercise of that authority which must reside in every well constituted society, for the enforcing of respect to its own laws.

A departure from these maxims in two important deviations, as respecting the contests between Churches co-ordinate and equal in their institution, and the establishment of an independent and temporal power in the
Clergy

Clergy over the Laity, was productive of many evils, of which a cursory and collected view may illustrate the importance of some principles, restored by the first efforts of the Reformation in England.

In reflecting on the description of past times, it is the duty and interest of all who are concerned for the glory, and anxious to promote the influence of religion, to advert principally to those impediments to its success, which have arisen in departments in which they are especially concerned. The pastors and teachers of a Reformed Church are never implicated but by ignorance or malevolence in the charges against the vitiated rulers who disgraced the Christian profession in former times: but while with the confidence of a renewed spirit they reject the indiscriminate imputations which have been profusely dealt out against the ministerial character, they will investigate with candid and impartial enquiry every source from which corruption may have flowed.

When, from disregard to the uniform precepts of our Lord, the influence and power which naturally resulted from appointment to the sacred office became in themselves the
objects

objects of ambition, a fatal change was effected in the government of the Church. New grounds of distinction were established, and disparities introduced, which neither the ordinances of Christ had authorised, nor the welfare of the community required. That pre-eminence of direction which the Apostles* and their successors had allowed among themselves for the purposes alone of regularity and order, and in perfect consistency with equal claims of authority, was made the foundation for the erection of fictitious pretensions. The occasional president at the synod, and the elated bishop of the larger di-

* St. James, St. Peter, and St. John, seem to have been allowed a kind of pre-eminence over the Apostles, as "pillars" of the Church and chief Apostles; see Galat. ch. ii. ver. 9. 2 Cor. ch. xi. ver. 5. probably as eminently distinguished by our Lord, and as having been present at the more intimate events and transactions of his life. St. Peter appears to have taken the lead for some time after our Saviour's ascension. See Acts, ch. i. ver. 15. ch. ii. ver. 14, 37. ch. iv. ver. 8. ch. v. ver. 15, 29. This however was a mere priority of place, not of order or power. Afterwards James, who, according to tradition, was appointed Bishop of Jerusalem by the Apostles on their quitting that city, possessed the right of convening councils, and of presiding at them. See Acts, ch. xii. ver. 17. ch. xv. ver. 13, 19. ch. xxi. ver. 18. Gal. ch. ii. ver. 12. The precedency does not seem to have led him to forget our Saviour's instructions. The episcopal chair or throne of St. James was preserved with great veneration at Jerusalem in the time of Eusebius. Eccles. Hist. l. vii. c. 19.

ocese

ocese *, assumed an unequal title and a controlling power.

As present interests intermingled in the cause, the dissensions and heresies which from the first had been engendered by the vanities of human wisdom, gathered strength and importance, and disturbed the unity and peaceful constitution of the Church. The decrees of its lawful authority were weakened by difference of sentiment. Judgment was set up against judgment, and decisions were evaded by insidious appeals. The passions which had been suppressed were again raised; and the objects which appeared to consecrate their exertions, were favourable only to the impending dominion of an antichristian spirit †. As pride and emulation pervaded every order and department, dishonourable contests were provoked, and mutual encroachments of jurisdiction were attempted. The rights of the inferior orders of the Ministry were invaded, the distinctions of the higher degrees

* The synods, assembled in the second and following centuries, contributed to raise the pretensions of those who presided in them. The pattern of the Hebrew priesthood was pleaded in apology for the assumption of exterior splendour.

† Imminente Antichristo, says Cyprian, Epist. lix.

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usurped,

usurped, and the independency of separate Churches superseded or controlled.

As a desire also to establish an ascendancy, where no advancement of the spiritual interests of Christ's kingdom was concerned, unhappily prevailed, the veneration of the people for the Ministry was abused. Their legitimate claim to be consulted in regulations of general interest was overlooked. Their application to their bishops and pastors for arbitration in civil disputes; and the charitable instructions of the Gospel, were produced as a justification for the coercive interference of the clergy in secular concerns *. The offerings cheerfully poured out by a grateful piety were accumulated, and seduced the imagination of those who had before gloried as being "poor, yet making many "rich †." The constancy of that fortitude which had been displayed "in much pati-

* Ambrose, Epist. xxiv. August. Sem. xxiv. in Psalm cxviii. St. Austin considered the Bishops as virtually bound to the office of arbitration by 1 Cor. ch. vi. ver. 4. See Bingham's Antiq. b. ii. ch. 7. Euseb. de Vit. Const. l. iv. c. 27. But a foundation was hereby laid for more invidious and hurtful pretensions—for a delegation of the cause to subordinate Ministers—and gradually for the erection of temporal, under the title of Spiritual Courts.

† Cyprian. de Lapsis.

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“ence and in afflictions,” began to yield, and shrink from the severe trials which prevailed; “to fall away,” when “tribulation” arose* ; and to profess the faith only when it flourished in the courts of worldly protection. Even the stern integrity, which had endured persecution and oppression, relaxed in seasons of security and peace; and the Disciples of that Lord to whom the kingdoms of the world, and the glory of them, had been vainly proffered, gazed with too eager fondness on those prospects of advantage which occasionally brightened in the vicissitudes of the Church, captivating unworthy members to engage in the sacred office. A solicitude to retain the veneration, merited by the genuine virtues of Christian fortitude, excited fruitless exertions and ineffectual austerity. Hence undue concessions to popular prejudice, and vain imitations of Heathen practices. Hence, as the Spirit had expressly foretold, “a departure

* In the furious and unrelenting persecutions carried on by Decius Trajan in the third century, the Church had first occasion to lament the apostacy of some of its members, whose eagerness for readmission to Communion, when security was restored, was the cause of great dissensions. See the Epistles of Cyprian, the venerable advocate for discipline, and Euseb. Hist. Eccles. lib. vi. cap. 44.

“ from the faith, giving heed to seducing spirits and doctrines of devils, speaking lies in hypocrisy, forbidding to marry, and commanding to abstain from meats, which God hath created to be received with thanksgiving of them which believe and know the truth *,” boasting its suspected continence † and counterfeit restraint.

Hence also it was that “bodily exercise, profiting little,” and founded on abject conceptions of God, was preferred to “godliness, profitable unto all things ;” though having only the show of wisdom, as without humility, and “placing the kingdom of God in meat and drink :” conducting the disciples of him, who went about doing good to mankind, to ascetic devotion and solitary rigor, and inflaming the zeal which should work by love, to waste its vigour in mystic contemplation, productive

* 1 Tim. ch. iv. ver. 1—3. See the account of Tatian in Mosheim, cent. ii. p. 2. § 9. & Clem. Alex. Strom. lib. iii.

† See the account of the *συμιαστοι*, of a vicious and seductive custom adopted from the Heathen philosophers, and first introduced into the Church of Antioch, by Paul of Samosata, in the third century. The custom must have extensively prevailed, as it is condemned by Cyprian, Basil, Chrysostom, and Jerom, and the Councils of Antioch, Ancyra, and Nice. See Dodwell's Dissert. Cyrian. iii.

of

of splenetic pride * and extravagant follies. The arts of worldly contrivance were employed to render Christianity subservient to human projects ; and whatever would tend to strengthen and extend its influence was incorporated with it, in accommodation to the prevailing passions and prejudices of mankind. The errors of excessive devotion, the splendid rites and imposing ceremonies of Paganism, were countenanced by an indulgent policy †. The frauds of the Heathen priesthood were revived, and the follies of the Gentile philosophy allowed to adulterate the translations of the Scriptures, and the commentaries on inspired wisdom.

In the usurpation of the Papal power, gradually erected in that city, which was destined a second time to rule over the

* Paul, who set the example of retirement to the Christians, by flying from the persecution of Decius, had probably imbibed the fantastic principles of the mystic theology. He lived in the deserts of Thebais, in a manner consistent with the notions of the Eastern hermits. The melancholy spirit of seclusion increased considerably in the fourth century, under the instructions of Dionysius the Areopagite, and laid the foundation of mockery, the discipline of which was regulated by Anthony. Bingham's Christian Antiq. b. vii.

† Incense was introduced into some Churches in the third century. See Beveridge ad Canon. Apost. p. 461. See also August. Epist. 119.

nations of the earth *, we behold a portraiture of the corruption which almost every where debased and disfigured the Christian world. The veneration due to a Church claiming the dignity of being founded by distinguished Apostles at the central seat of empire, and in the first ages celebrated for especial purity of faith †, led other countries to receive, as of sacred institution, those doctrines which were contrived only to conspire with views of worldly aggrandisement, and which, when found to be productive

* ——— Pegaseus Tibi

Temo, volaturusque latè

Regna super populosque currus,

Casimir, Ode iii. ad Urban. VIII.

This is insufficient.

Magnusque latè diceris arbiter

Cœlumque, Terrasque, et Maria, et Stygâ,

Amnemque Cocytii severum, et

Elysiam cohibere Lethen.

See Ode x.

It would have been well if the flattery had been confined to poetry.

† Irenæus, who opposed the arrogant assumptions of Victor, in the dispute about the celebration of Easter, with great prudence and moderation, mentions the Church of Rome as a very great and ancient Church, which preserved, in common with other Churches governed by the Bishops, in succession from the Apostles, the genuine and unsuspected traditions and faith which the Apostles delivered; and maintains that the sincerity of doctrine might be decided by an appeal to that Church; which was allowed to have preserved it uncorrupt, and which, on account of its eminent and principal dignity, had the right to

ductive of present advantage, were retained, even by those Churches which resisted the pretensions of Rome, and rejected the supremacy which it endeavoured to usurp*.

When the Imperial throne was removed by Constantine to a distant capital, the ambition of the Bishops of the new metropolis was supported by the partial favour of the Emperor and his successors; and as titles, riches, and privileges were lavished with ostentatious profusion on the rivals of the Roman Pontiffs, the incentives to jealousy and dissension were multiplied. The emulation which flamed with increasing violence between the contending Churches, involved every dependent interest in the disgraceful struggle. Raised above the Churches of the

to be consulted. By this he does not concede any pre-eminence of jurisdiction to the Romish Church, but urges its authority against heretics, as eminent and unquestionable. Cont. Hær. l. iii. c. 3. When claims of superiority over other Churches, as to decision and authority, were afterwards set up, Cyprian and other Bishops indignantly rejected them; and the African Churches pronounced excommunication against all who should appeal to foreign Churches. Cyprian. Epist. lv. & Præfat. in Concil. Carthag. & de Simplic. Prælat. Hieron. Epist. ad Evag. The Church of Rome attempted to ground its pretensions on a suspected Canon of the Council of Sardis, and on forged decrees of later Councils. Appeals were not allowed by the Councils of Nice or Constantinople.

* Stillingfleet, Orig. Britan. 226. St. Peter's successor, like the Apostle, first confessed, and afterwards denied Christ.

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East,

East *, the Bishops of Constantinople, while they rejected the assumptions of the Pastors of the antient capital, were accused of aiming themselves at the universal supremacy of the Church. The contest, though it implicated trivial subjects of dispute, excited no difference of sentiment on essential errors, but served only to disgrace the cause of religion, till it terminated in schism and mutual excommunication †.

The strongest illustration, however, of the fatal effects which have resulted from a disregard to the character of Christ's kingdom, and to which, in connection with our sub-

* In the Council of Constantinople, A. D. 381, the Bishop of that city, by authority of Theodosius the Great, was placed in the first rank after the Bishop of Rome, to the prejudice of the claims of Antioch and Alexandria. The successors of Nectarius availed themselves of the distinction, to extend their power. The Council of Chalcedon in 451 assigned the same privileges to the Bishop of Constantinople, as the Council of Nice had appointed to that of Rome. See Can. 28. The Bishops of Constantinople had been allowed the title of Universal Bishop, by Leo and Justinian, without assuming therefrom much accession of power. In the 6th century Gregory the Great took much umbrage at the title, and vigorously opposed it, as designed to establish a real and antichristian claim. See Mosheim, cent. vi. p. ii. ch. 2.

† See the account of the contest concerning Photius in the ninth century, and of that between Cerularius and Leo IX. in the eleventh century, which produced a final breach of communion; and in which a pretended zeal for religion, in trivial points, was made a pretext for ambitious dissension.

ject,

ject, we cannot but allude, was exhibited after the investiture of the Roman Pontiff with the majesty of a temporal prince, when " he received from the dragon his " power, and his seat, and great authority * ;" then it was that every ambitious passion was inflamed, and the Tempter worshipped for the glory of those kingdoms which he displayed. The desire of enlarging the territory, and of increasing the political influence of the Popes, led them to interfere with every government, and to intermingle their destructive principles, till they loosened and moulded its frame in accommodation to their interests. As their portentous shade extended, they erected in almost every land an hierarchy, often independent of the civil

* Rev. ch. xiii. ver. 2. Pepin compelled Aistulphus to resign to the see of Rome, the exarchate of Ravenna and Pentapolis, and other territories, and reinforced the cession the following year. Charlemagne, and the partial respect of Mathilda, daughter of Boniface, Duke of Tuscany, to Gregory VII. added considerable grants to the papal dominion, which was at first held as a kind of feudal tenure, in subjection to the Emperor, who nominated or confirmed the election of the Pope. Innocent III. possessed the whole territory from the Adriatic to Ostia. The spiritual jurisdiction, as Gibbon has observed, was extended from the coast of the Baltic to the shores of the Pacific Ocean.

authority,

authority*, endowed with regal grants and titles†, claiming injurious privileges and dangerous exemptions‡; strengthening the arbitrary powers under which it flourished, and domineering with haughty insolence over the princes whom it governed.

Confident in the strong dominion which they had established, the aspiring pontiffs affected, as occasion served, with imperious tones and forged pretensions§, the supreme direction of
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* That Priests were to be honoured, and not judged by Sovereigns—that a custom contrary to a decree of the Pope was void—that a clerk was not to be sued in a temporal court, under pain of anathema to the plaintiff, and of excommunication to the judge, were maxims of the Canon law. See Can. 15. Concil. Lateran. Reeve's Hist. of English Law, Vol. I. ch. ii.

† The public grants, or regalia of territory with which superstitious princes and sovereign states, who in tumultuous times wished to avail themselves of the Clergy, invested ecclesiastical persons, and which conveyed temporal titles and royalties, were particularly injurious to their character; converting them into secular princes, and leading them to engage in military operations and political intrigues. These mischievous grants took place particularly in the 8th century, under the partial countenance of Pepin.

‡ The claim of exemption from the civil jurisdiction has been maintained by the Romish Clergy, in remarkable instances, within very recent periods. It is well known that, in order to punish the Jesuit Malagrida in Portugal for his crimes, it was thought necessary to convict him by the Inquisition, not for treason, but heresy, upon some frivolous charge.

§ See the account of the decretals and other forgeries in Mich. Geddes's Dissert. de Canon. Sardicenf. in Miscellan. Tract.

an universal sovereignty*; maintained not only by the influence of superstition and perverted literature †, which chained the deluded nations in their bondage; but by a peculiar jurisprudence ‡, uniting with, and controlling the municipal laws of the independent kingdoms, which they ruled, as fiefs as it were of the papal see; which they harassed with vexatious and inquisitorial courts; and governed by insidious agents, united in general dispersion by the strongest ties, and bounden by

Tract. tom. ii. p. 415. & Mosheim. cent. 9. p. 2. § 2. Murator. Droit de St. Empire sur l'Etat. Ecclef. Baron. Annal. 865. § 8.

* That an universal and absolute power over temporal as well as spiritual concerns, hath been claimed by divers Popes, successively for many ages, in solemn declarations and notorious practices never formerly disclaimed, is fully shewn by Barrow, in his treatise on the Pope's Supremacy. It is necessary occasionally to review these testimonies, as they have been overlooked in some recent representations of the Pope.

† The Popes seized every channel of literature. In the fourteenth century they had adopted most of the extravagancies of philosophy, and employed its volumes in subserviency to their designs; prohibiting all books which they did not approve. Cardinal Pallavachini once remarked, *Senza Aristotele noi mancavaremo molti articoli da fede.*

‡ The civil law, written in a language understood by few but the Clergy, was subservient to the support of the undefined pretensions of the ecclesiastical power; and when the spiritual were separated entirely from the temporal courts, justice was flagrantly violated. The civil and canon law gradually interwove their decrees with the common law, and coloured it to a resemblance of their character.

oaths

oaths of fealty to their service * ; extending their foreign influence as their domestic government became wretched and despised ; draining with insatiable avarice from every country, revenues to feed the corruption and instigate the violence of their persecuting and sanguinary Ministers ; and proclaiming with final extravagance an authority superior to that of the inspired writings, of which the sacred volume was closed, and concealed from an unhappy Church †.

The proud waves of this uncontrolled ambition, which dashed against every shore, extended with peculiar violence to this country ; undermining its monuments of civil liberty, and defacing its most sacred rights. Treated as a Roman province, as the patrimony of the Church, its sovereigns had been degraded and trampled on ‡ ; its legislature

* Gregory VII. Urban II. and Paschal II. required an oath of exclusive allegiance, destructive of fidelity to princes. See also Pontiff. Roman. in Consec. Episc.

† The use of the Scriptures was interdicted by the Lateran Council under Innocent III. a prohibition enforced by succeeding Popes.

‡ See John's oath of homage to Innocent III. Collyer's Collect. of Records, Vol. I.

overawed ;

overawed*; its valuable preferment forestalled and possessed by foreigners, and the whole nation oppressed by the vexatious tyranny of a jurisdiction contending for independency of civil control†, and subjecting the whole discipline and doctrine of the Church to profit.

By whatever motives Henry was excited to throw off the Papal supremacy, it was a measure which removed at once the complicated causes of those evils which have been described, as to their operation in this country. It effected by one bold exertion what the predecessors of the king had often laboured to establish, a distinction between the

* Till the time of Richard II. the Archbishops were empowered by Bulls from Rome to assemble their Clergy without permission of the king, and to pass canons and constitutions, binding with the king's sanction. Statute of Premunire, A. D. 1593. The suppression of the Knights Templars, and the assignment of their land to the Knights Hospitallers, now Knights of Malta, confirmed by statute of provision in 1531, and the Legantine Court of Wolfey, exhibit farther proofs of the Pope's assumption of temporal power in England; and the pecuniary exactions were vexatious and excessive.

† William the Conqueror authorized a dissolution of the joint jurisdiction of the Bishops and Sheriffs, and the separate establishment of the spiritual courts for the exclusive trial of spiritual causes. The Canon law, which the Bishops used, soon embraced more temporal concerns in this country than in any other; as testamentary causes, tithes, intestacies, civil contracts, &c. See Blackstone, and Reeves's Hist. of English Law.

spiritual

spiritual and temporal powers*; and released the kingdom from an iron yoke of grievous imposition, under which it had long groaned with impatience and reluctant indignation.

The beneficial effects which resulted from the rejection of this usurpation, may be illustrated in three principal points of view. In the first, as it precluded all intercourse of foreign power, and all contests of spiritual pre-eminence with other countries, by asserting the independency of every Church as to the regulation of its internal discipline. In

* Bramhall's just Vindication of the Church of England. Alfred, who, as well as other Saxon kings, had opposed the assumptions of the Papal power, withstood for six years the Pope's endeavour to restore Wilfride, Archbishop of York, and told the Pope's Nuncios, that he "honoured them as his parents, for their grave lives and venerable aspects; but that he would not give any assent to their legation; because it was against reason that a person once condemned by the whole English council should be restored upon the Pope's letter;" and the Archbishop was not reinstated till he quitted the monasteries of Hengesthill, Dean, and Ripon. "*Fidelitatem facere nolui nec volo,*" said William the Conqueror. William II. maintained his right of the investiture of the Bishops, and forbade all appeals to, or intercourse with, Rome. Henry the First and Second, John, and other princes, contested, and often felt the weight of the Papal power. Edward the First particularly availed himself of the Avignon schism, to depress the usurpation. Some of these princes appear to have disputed the spiritual, as well as temporal pretensions of the Popes, artfully and successfully maintained as they were. See Matthew Paris, *Hist. Mag.* p. 82, 83, 101, 104. and Wilkins's *Concil. Mag. Brit. t. i. p. 434.*

the

the second, as it re-established the Church of Christ, as existing in this country, on the basis of a spiritual kingdom, subject in civil concerns to the civil power. In the third, as it restored the Ministry to the legitimate object of their profession; the establishment of truth.

The evils displayed in cursory description in the preceding part of this discourse, as the fatal consequences of those ambitious contests of superiority which gradually changed the character of Christ's kingdom, exhibit but an imperfect sketch of the disgraceful circumstances which the successive scenes of history disclose. By nothing could they be so effectually counteracted, as by the adoption of the important principle of the independency of every Church in its national character; as subject to no spiritual head but Christ; as conceding no superiority, and claiming no pre-eminence of jurisdiction; as authorised to frame its own laws, and to regulate its own government. This principle it is, which, while it tends to reduce the different assemblies of Christ's Disciples to the level of that equality which He established, excludes all emulation but that of fidelity to his service, and disclaims every idea of mutual animosity and persecution;

tion ; which, while it acknowledges no pastor of an universal Church, limited to mortal exertions, submits the preservation of the purity of the individual establishment to the vigilance of its immediate guardians, responsible for the integrity of the faith, the common pledge committed to the custody of all, only to Christ and his universal Church, and restricted in the regulation of the exterior regimen of the society only by orders of necessary institution, and considerations of local expediency ; which, while it recedes merely from a nominal centre, preserves its appointed orbit, violating no connection of Catholic union, deranging no system of general harmony.

This important principle, grounded on the essential character of a spiritual kingdom, and consecrated by the sanction of the Apostles and first ages *, was the foundation laid by our Reformers, to authorise those changes by which they sought to restore the image and decayed character of the Primitive Church. In the language of early and unadulterated truth they declared, that “ all
“ the Apostles were equal, and all the Bi-
“ shops were also equal, since the whole

* Con. Nic. Can. vi. Concil. Const. c. 3.

“ office

“ office and episcopate was one entire thing,
 “ of which every Bishop had a complete and
 “ equal share *.” Anxious to exhibit in the
 excellency of their renewed Church a con-
 formity to the purest model, they withdrew
 not from the original platform of the Ca-
 tholic faith, but from the innovations of
 modern corruption. Cordial to maintain
 the fellowship of general sanctity, they pre-
 sumed not to represent the light of salva-
 tion as beaming only within the restricted
 limits of a national establishment, but con-
 sidered all who were united by “ one bap-
 “ tism” to “ one faith,” as common Disci-
 ples of “ one Lord,” common members of
 one Church †.

This principle, however, when adopted in
 its most extensive sense, did not give any
 countenance to unnecessary revolutions or
 divisions ; since, though it admitted the
 right of every community to withdraw
 from essential and fundamental corrup-
 tions, and to establish and regulate its own
 ecclesiastical discipline, it furnished no apo-

* Cyprian. de Unitate. Burnet, Vol. I. b. ii. fol. 138.
 Collyer's Collect. of Records, Vol. II. fol. 18.

† Nowell's Catechism, p. 96. Acts, ch. x. ver. 34, 35.
 Gal. ch. vi. ver. 15, 16. Ephes. ch. iv. ver. 5. Col. ch. iii.
 ver. 11, 12. Matt. ch. xxviii. ver. 19.

logy for causeless separation or wanton disturbance of general constitutions: it did not set up the individual congregation in opposition to the Catholic Church, nor erect private judgment as commensurate to the deliberate decision of the spiritual authority. Consecrated on the ground of religious liberty, it became the basis of toleration, and produced immediate effects in the indulgence conceded to congregations of foreigners in this country *; though indeed a farther extension of its import was necessary to embrace the rights of the individual subject to the enjoyment of an unfettered conscience, and to that uncontrolled freedom of worship which is now allowed.

The retrospect of the corruptions of the Romish Church which has been made, may serve also to illustrate the important advantages which could not but result from subjecting to lawful control a powerful and ambitious clergy, who, screened under formidable protection, and claiming exemption from civil courts †, had been tempted to the indulgence

* As that of John A-lasco, and the French and Walloon Churches. See Burnet and Clarendon's Hist. vol. ii. p. 174.

† An oath was imposed on Stephen, that ecclesiastical persons and causes should be subject only to the jurisdiction of the bishop.

indulgence of every vicious passion; whose jurisdiction, nearly paramount to the legislative dominion of the country, had exercised a tyranny of the most offensive and dangerous character.

From the first measures of Henry, which cut away the root of the Papal usurpation, every branch of the independent power of the Clergy soon withered and decayed. Their coercive authority, justly considered as of human appointment, was restrained, by qualifications judged expedient by the State *; and

bishop. Blackstone, b. iii. ch. 8. Henry I. forbid any clerk to attend in temporal courts. In succeeding reigns there were many contests on this point. King John, after the constitutions of Clarendon had passed, conceded to the Clergy that no clerk should for the future be brought personally before any secular judge for any crime or transgression, except for offences against the forest laws; or in the case of a lay fee, for which service was due to the king, or some other secular person. See Reeves's Hist. of English Law, vol. i. p. 179. Edward IV. confirmed the exemptions from arrest in criminal causes and penalties of premunire. Coilyer, Vol. I. 52. Places of worship were considered as sanctuaries from the Saxon times, by a privilege useful in turbulent and vindictive ages, but dreadfully pernicious in later periods. Many abbeyes were, by usurpation or concession, exempted from all jurisdiction of Pope or King.

* 25 Henry VIII. c. 14. Burnet, Vol. I. b. ii. fol. 147. Coilyer, Vol. II. p. ii. b. ii. fol. 83. The power which the Clergy derived from the consent of their congregations before they were protected by the State, may be considered under Christian governments as a derivation from the State. The State should indeed then be regarded not in opposition to the Church, but as constituting a part of it—as the Laity of the Church.

their jurisdiction, as far as it was derived from civil delegation, was regulated in due subserviency to civil interests *. The Church became as the Hebrew Church † under the kingly government; and the Christian Church ‡ in the earlier ages, as to its external direction, and temporal privileges and immunities, subject to a civil head, and controllable by the civil legislature.

If in the separation from the Papal supremacy the line of discrimination between the spiritual and temporal powers was inaccurately drawn § ; if, in surrendering the complicated

* In the preamble to 25th of Henry VIII. c. 21. Parliament is said to have authority to abrogate, null, amplify, or dispense with all human laws of this realm. The King is head of the Church only as the representative of the Supreme Power of the state. His power as such must be sanctioned by Parliament; and laws passed under his authority in convocation, are not supposed to be binding on the Laity till confirmed by Parliament. See Strange's Reports.

† 1 Sam. ch. xv. ver. 17. 1 Kings, ch. ii. ver. 26, 27, 35. 1 Chron. ch. xxiii. ver. 6. ch. xxiv. ver. 3. ch. xxviii. ver. 21. 2 Chron. ch. vii. ver. 8, 9. ch. viii. ver. 14, 15. ch. xxiv. ver. 5—9. Collyer's Eccles. Hist. Vol. II. p. ii. b. ii. ‡ Matt. ch. xvii. ver. 22. Rom. ch. xiii. ver. 7. 1 Peter, ch. ii. ver. 13. After the establishment of Christianity under the temporal protection, the Emperors passed ecclesiastical laws, and summoned councils. The Kings of England had generally considered the civil supremacy as their right, as could be shewn from the time of Lucius.

§ The spiritual rights of the Clergy would probably never have been affected, had they not been blended with the assumption

plicated and entangled claims, interwoven by long prescription with the spiritual authority, some undue concessions were made to imperious invasion *, and some rights incautiously

tion of temporal power. Henry's tyrannical temper could not brook the idea of any authority but his own. He was embarrassed, and wished to evade the force of Acts, ch. xx. ver. 28. Heb. ch. xiii. ver. 17. and his jealousy of the former pretensions of the Clergy led him to declarations injurious to their spiritual rights. He affirmed in his Letter to the Convocation what was not strictly true, that he claimed nothing more by the supremacy than what Christian kings in primitive times assumed in their own dominions. The Clergy, who in 1530 first reluctantly conceded the supremacy to the king, did it with reserve, and as far as might consist with the laws of Christ; and 26th of Henry VIII. c. 1. was made with reference to this declaration, which was followed by many others in the same strain. See Declar. on the Functions and Divine Institut. of Bishops; Burnet's Adden. fol. 1. p. 321; and Plowden's Church and State, b. iii. ch. 6. The successors of Henry shrunk from this claim, though they sometimes assumed undue powers; and it was gradually perceived that they might decline the spiritual without injury to the temporal authority. See Preamble to 25th Henry VIII. c. 21; Injunctions of Elizabeth, 37th Article, &c.

* The 25th of Henry VIII. c. 9. which gave to commissioners, appointed by the king, a power of abrogating Canons, and which allowed appeals to the king in court of delegates, seems to affect the spiritual rights of the Clergy, but was probably designed to give to the king a cognizance only of civil matters; "such as affected his prerogative, or the laws of the realm." One of the laws of the *Reformatio Legum Ecclesiasticarum*, established in virtue of this act, certainly transgresses the line, when it asserts that all jurisdiction, ecclesiastical as well as secular, is derived from the king, as the only fountain. Many statutes, and the first oaths of supremacy, hold the same loose language; giving all manner of spiritual and ecclesiastical authority to the king, and taking it from the Bishops, except as it exists by delegation from, and dependency on him.

incautiously or basely relinquished*, they were steadily reclaimed, and finally recovered. The Church, in the ultimate and permanent description of its character, was countenanced in the possession of its legitimate powers, but was understood, in its just definition, to be a congregation composed of Laity as well as Clergy.

The spiritual privileges of its duly ap-

See 26th Hen. VIII. c. 1. 31st Hen. VIII. c. 17. 37th Hen. VIII. c. 17. 1st Edw. VI. c. 2. 1st Eliz. c. 1. 1st James I. c. 25. 13th Car. II. c. 12. The 25th of Henry VIII. c. 20. gave also too much to the civil power, when it compelled the Bishops, under the penalty of premunire, to consecrate persons nominated or elected to a bishopric. But however exceptionable the terms of these statutes, it does not appear that any deliberate intention existed, or was understood to exist in the legislature, to authorise any invasion of the purely spiritual authority of the Bishops.

* The surrender of the bishoprics in the reign of Edward VI. was certainly a most unworthy concession; and the commission taken out by Cranmer, Bonner, and others (whoever set the example), which admitted the derivation of all jurisdiction, both ecclesiastical and civil, from the king, to be exercised at his precarious pleasure, have been justly stigmatized, notwithstanding the tardy admission of other things of divine right. Cranmer's Erastian sentiments, however, were soon relinquished; and it was well understood in Elizabeth's reign, if not before, that the episcopal character was not derived from, or alienable by, the civil power; for when Parker was consecrated Archbishop, upon a question of the competency of the Bishops to consecrate, as they had been legally deprived in the late reign, it was determined that, as they had been once consecrated, the episcopal character remained, and they might convey it. See Neal, Vol. I. c. 4.

pointed

pointed rulers were reveredced *. Their ministerial functions, their appropriate powers of ordaining, instituting, confirming, consecrating, and conferring of spiritual authority, though transferred from the Pope to the Bishops, and ordinaries †, the rightful claimants of it, were fully acknowledged. Their jurisdiction, purely spiritual, was preserved uninjured ‡, though their ecclesiastical jurisdiction, affecting civil interests, was to be ex-

* Mr. Plowden, after a full investigation of the subject, has observed, that, if we take the whole of the circumstances under our consideration, and examine attentively and impartially the laws respecting this subject, we shall find that they are emphatically grounded on the principle that the source of the spiritual jurisdiction and Church government is completely out of the competency or power of the civil magistrate, Church and State, b. ii. c. 5.

† The mixed power of the Pope resolved itself into the Church and State. The spiritual authority, if not in precise description, yet in operation, was transferred to the Archbishops, Bishops, &c. over whom the king has a superintendant supremacy of restraint, and of appeal in concerns of civil interest. Hooker, b. viii.

‡ See the 25th Henry VIII. c. 19. The Clergy, in conformity to a submission which they had made, are forbidden to assemble without the king's writ, or to attempt any thing, when assembled, without the king's licence. The Clergy have certainly a transmitted right to exercise a jurisdiction, merely spiritual, independently of the civil power; but they can have no coactive power to enforce their decisions, however binding on the conscience, till accepted by the state; and when in alliance with the state, they with propriety consent that their ecclesiastical meetings and deliberations should be suggested and sanctioned by the civil governor.

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toms of the country; and was
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The ecclesiastical Canons, as framed partly with the assumption of temporal power, were subjected to as far as they had a civil aspect their validity on the civil ratification of ecclesiastical courts, restricted in force and proceedings, in substance controlling jurisdiction, as to content interest, were gradually established in establishments of distinguished

* The Clergy, though legitimate in their will, have no infallibility ; and the Laity, in consistency of their decrees with the revelation, signify their acceptance of them before they produce their temporal effect.

† See 25th Hen. VIII. c. 19. 1 Elizabeth suspended the authority of the Legatine and the Canon Law. The Canons enacted by the Clergy of James I. as not confirmed by Parliament, were to be not obligatory on the Laity, except in so far as they were confirmatory of the ancient Canon law, what was not confirmed by the Clergy, was not to be entitled to from the Clergy. Blackstone's

† By the alterations which took place
and since, especially by statute 13 Car. II.

Thus estimated, the genuine rights and legitimate claims of the Church have been found not only to be compatible with the rights and authority of the state, but favourable to the advancement of its highest interests. The distinct characters of the two jurisdictions were practically marked out*, however since they may have been theoretically confounded. The repugnancies and clashing claims of discordant powers were henceforth to cease. If the lines of their respective operations should approach, it would

tical courts, which were formerly stigmatized for partiality and arbitrary proceedings, are become celebrated for moderation and equity. "It must be acknowledged," says Sir William Blackstone, "to the honour of the spiritual courts, that though they continue to this day to decide many questions which are properly of temporal cognizance, yet justice is in general so ably and impartially administered in those tribunals, especially of the superior kind, and the boundaries of their power are now so well known and established, that no material inconvenience at present arises from this jurisdiction still continuing in the antient channel; and should an alteration be attempted, great confusion would probably arise in overturning long established forms, and in new modelling a course of proceedings that has now prevailed for several centuries." Blackstone's Com. b. iii. c. 7.

* Mr. Plowden maintains, that the acts of Parliament in the 13th and 14th centuries, upon the rights and franchises of the Church of England, exactly and forcibly distinguished the true line of demarcation between the spiritual and temporal powers. It is certain however that they were very insufficient barriers against the Papal encroachments: and nothing but the final rejection of the foreign supremacy could perfectly dis sever the two powers.

be

be in the concurrence of similar designs ; and the sacred wheels of religion were to roll on in harmony with those of civil government.

The members of a spiritual kingdom were now, no more to raise themselves in the confidence of impunity, with pretensions hostile to the power by which they were protected ; or to harass and distract the subjects of their sovereign with a double service, by holding out duties inconsistent with civil allegiance. They were no more to cherish, with affections alienated by a foreign residence, any views inconsistent with the interest of the country. Detached by no distant ties, biassed by no remote objects *, they could not but adhere with grateful fidelity to the welfare of the state ; and in the attachment of a conscientious obedience call forth the energies of religion to invigorate the influence of lawful government. Limited to the defined endowments of ancient appointment, hereafter to be augmented by no fraudulent arts, they ceased to provoke envy by exorbitant

* It is well known how much the ambitious views of Wolsey influenced Henry and his kingdom, and how injuriously to their interests an artful favourite led his sovereign to form or to break connections, to declare for war or peace, as the projects for the Popedom varied.

wealth,

wealth, or to excite jealousy by unreasonable power.

The last advantage which is stated to have resulted to society from the rejection of the Papal control, was the restoration of the Ministry to the legitimate object of its profession—the establishment of truth. The appointed advocates of divine wisdom, when not overawed by a pretended infallibility, ventured to remove that veil which had concealed the deformity of error. Liberated from the service of an earthly master, they were left to obey the instructions of their heavenly Lord. Released from subjection to the bondage imposed by accumulated traditions, and the erroneous decrees of human policy, they were encouraged to investigate truth only at its sacred source; and its deductions could not but flow with a beneficial course, when reason, unfettered by prejudice, laboured with sincerity to clear its streams.

The enlightened rulers of the Church were the guides who took the lead in every measure of a temperate and sober change. Their becoming praise it was, to suggest the council, and their honourable distinction, to mature the work. Members of the sacred order were those,

those, who, forsaking the corruptions of a depraved faith, proclaimed with zealous alacrity the genuine doctrines of Revelation. Strenuous advocates for advancing truth, they stood forth the champions of its controverted points. Their judicious exposition detailed its evidence; their eloquent vindications enforced its arguments with resistless demonstration. At every step some worldly interest was sacrificed; some lucrative superstition disclaimed. Anxious only for the establishment of a pure faith, they disregarded considerations of present profit. The sainted image was broken in pieces, and the venerated relic trodden under foot, at the suggestion of those whose revenues had been swelled by the devotion of their credulous and misguided votaries, but who no longer wished to promote earthly objects by religion, or to "corrupt the Word of God for gain." The imposture of fictitious miracles was exposed, and the fallacy of human intercessions and indulgences decried * by those who, had they consulted secular advantage, would have laboured, as did many interested men, to secure their continued influence.

* Acts, 22d article.

None were more eager than the Clergy, who had thrown off the bandage of a blind reverence to the Papal see, to acknowledge the enormity of those evils which had so long prevailed; none were more ready with indignant warmth to reprobate the pretended conversion of the sacred elements, the denial of the cup to the Laity, the efficacy of operated masses, the abuses of auricular confession, the burthen of multiplied sacraments. Less sincere advocates for truth would have fought to check that ardour, which rushed forward but to share the pillage and alienated possessions of the Church; and to repress a spirit which too evidently betrayed, under the pretended zeal of reform, the schemes of innovation, and the designs of self-interest; but, anxious for the promotion of important principles, they looked only to the confirmation of them, and trusted that the temple of a purified faith would exhibit sufficient of the majesty, and inviolable sanctity of true religion, to awe and repel the invasion of sacrilegious men, and that “ He that dwelleth
“ in heaven would have his eye upon it and
“ defend it *.”

* 2 Maccabb. ch. iii.

From

From the period of the first restoration of sacred wisdom, its laws have been maintained by the successors of these distinguished men with similar and unrelaxing spirit; and every change in the progressive work of Reformation has been designed but to advance the principles, and promote the influence of religion.

By the members of an enlightened Ministry have the inspired oracles of the faith been anxiously studied and patiently explained; by their researches have the scattered documents of revelation been sought out and compared; by their industry likewise have the precepts of truth been circulated, and the elements of instruction diffused through every rank, till timid and erroneous policy would restrain the liberal exertion. By them has the cause of Christianity been established on a basis from which it cannot be removed, while that word which passeth not away shall continue to be published with every testimony of external evidence, and every illustration of human learning. The labours which have disclosed the accomplishment of prophecy, which have vindicated the truth of miracles, and brought forward

ward the beauty and consistency of revealed doctrines, have inscribed their deductions on monuments that can fall but with the decay of science, and be buried only in the general ruins of literature and knowledge.

SERMON

S E R M O N III.

JOHN xviii. 36.

Jesus answered, My kingdom is not of this world.

THE promises held out by Christ to his Disciples, were not, those of temporal prosperity. The servants who were to attest their zeal in the cause of a Master that had been wounded in the flesh, were to “arm” themselves with the same mind” to “take up “the cross,” and to shew the firmness and fidelity of their attachment in trials and sufferings. Unwilling to stir up passions ever ready to kindle, and desirous rather of animating his followers, even to a determined and estimated disregard of life, and its dearest interests, our Redeemer predicted to them only such blessings as through persecution were to be obtained. With denunciations of peril, and rejection

rejection and hatred from men, were conveyed no intermingled encouragements from the prospect of the conciliation of earthly favour. The Apostles and their early converts neither expected nor experienced the smiles of that friendship which was "at enmity with God." Taking the prophets who had spoken in the name of the Lord, "for an example of suffering affliction, and of patience," and "counting them happy which endured," considering themselves as it were "appointed to death *," they put on "the whole armour of God, having their loins girt about with truth, and having on the breast-plate of righteousness, that they might be able to withstand in the evil day †."

The virtues by which they were to illustrate the tendency of their religion, different as they were from the vain-glorious qualities which the Heathen world had been accustomed to admire, were to exhibit their highest excellency amidst scenes of sorrow and distress; and the integrity of the Christian faith was displayed with peculiar lustre amidst the mockeries and persecution which it sustained.

* James, ch. v. ver. 10, 11. 1 Cor. ch. iv. ver. 9.

† Ephes. ch. vi. ver. 11—18.

In reflecting on the distinguished and impressive character of the Primitive Church, compared with the faded features of its glory in later times, the prosperity which succeeded its days of affliction has been justly mentioned amidst the many causes which contributed to the corruption of its principles*. From such representation, however, it should not hastily be concluded, that the decay of Christianity was immediately and universally the effect of that earthly favour which naturally shone upon it, when accepted and countenanced by the opulent and powerful; nor should it be forgotten, that, amidst the splendour of its exaltation, the sincerity of its faith was preserved in many signal instances, "refusing to live in the flesh to the lusts of men." A religion, accommodated to the condition of mankind, was designed to resist the allurements of seduction, as well as the threats of terror; and no inconsiderable part of its instruction was directed to the preservation of rectitude, amidst circumstances of cheerful and exhilarating character.

If Christ, for obvious and important reasons, did not directly unfold in his predictions

* See preceding Discourse.

the elevation and temporal glory which were to dignify his Church, still was its establishment under earthly protection evidently in the contemplation of the divine scheme, as revealed in the assurances of ancient prophecy, and implied in the general declarations of Christ, as to the advancement and universal reception of the Gospel. When David, speaking of Christ under his type, foretold that all kings “should fall down before him,” all nations should “serve him* ;” when Isaiah predicted “of the Holy One whom man despised, whom the nation abhorred, the servant of rulers,” that “kings should see and arise, princes also should worship,” and that when the standard of Christ’s Church should be set up among the Gentiles, “kings should be its nursing fathers, and their queens its nursing mothers,” that they should “bow down with their face toward the earth, and lick up the dust” of Christ’s feet †; that the Gentiles should “come to his light,” and “kings to the brightness of his rising;” that “the sons of strangers should build the walls” of the Church; that it should

* Psalm lxxii. ver. 11. Psalm cii. ver. 15, 16. Psalm cxxxviii. Psalm cxlviii. ver. 11.

† Isaiah, ch. xlix. ver. 7, 22, 23.

“ suck

“ suck the milk of, the Gentiles, and the
 “ breast of kings *.” In these and similar
 descriptions were conveyed surely some inti-
 mations of an earthly prosperity, which should
 accompany the orient beams of the Church,
 and contribute in the first ages, as well as at its
 concluding period, to the manifestation of its
 glory to the Gentile nations of the earth ; and
 it cannot but be understood that the prostra-
 tion of the Eastern sages, who with personal
 worship presented rich offerings to the infant
 humility of Jesus, was but a partial figure of
 that reverence with which the sovereigns of
 the earth were to bow down to the lowly
 condition of the kingdom which he should
 establish with a small beginning.

The obligations imposed on the nations
 and potentates of the earth, in their collective
 and sovereign character, to adopt Christianity,
 and to promote its advancement, were not
 urged by Christ and his Apostles with specific
 injunction, since they were to be collected
 with sufficient evidence from the general
 tendency of the sacred instructions ; and since

* Isaiah, ch. lx. ver. 3—16. See also ch. lxii. ver. 2.
 and Revelations, ch. vii. which Sir Isaac Newton applies to the
 exaltation of the Church by Constantine, Vol. III. p. 74—77,
 as cited by Dr. Eveleigh. See also Lowman on the Revelation.

a direct invocation on temporal sovereignties would have discouraged the confidence of those who depended on invisible aid, and who in no respect appear to have leaned on the reed of earthly support, till Christianity was erected with extensive dominion.

The existence of such obligations, however, may be demonstrated by a representation of the actual constitution of civil society, and of the conclusions which are to be drawn from revelation and reason, as to its design and duties. In connection with which description it is purposed to shew, that the evils, which have been stated to result from the adoption of religion by the temporal power, do not necessarily arise from, or counterbalance, the advantages which may be derived from its establishment; and in conclusion to furnish, in continuation of our general subject, an exposition of the principles on which its civil appointment is maintained, in consistency with the design of the Reformation in this country.

If, without a view to model forms of polity on the Patriarchal scheme, we would collect the duties of the civil governor from the first institution of society, we should be compelled to reject those vague and conjectural speculations

speculations which represent men to have united in social compact with the limited views of protection and security; and confining our attention to authentic and indisputable records, should consider communities as at first composed of the acknowledged dependants of the Supreme God; religious families multiplied into religious tribes, cohering in the union of every interest, for the promotion of the general welfare, the advancement of the general happiness, the celebration of the general worship. Uniting in his own person the sovereign and the priestly character *, the father of the family, the patriarch of the tribe, the founder of the city, or the leader of the colony, was favoured by God, in proportion as he countenanced and promoted the cause of true religion.

Under the dispensation delivered by Moses, civil and ecclesiastical jurisdiction were for some time at least united in the same persons; acting indeed as the immediate ministers of God, and communicating in mingled instruction the political and religious precepts which were calculated for the government of

* *Omnibus his niveâ cinguntur tempora vittâ.*

Æneid VI.

a peculiar people*. From the constitution of a singular œconomy, subject to the especial superintendency of God, and directed by deputed servants, to whom his revelations were directly conveyed, and who acted under the power and testimonies of a miraculous commission, we are not authorised to argue beyond the conclusions which may be drawn from strict analogy, and the application of such principles as are evidently deducible from a contemplation of divine appointments, described “for our learning†;” and which, in cases not dissimilar, must be allowed to be impressive precedents. In strict consistency, however, with this reserve, it is just to maintain that the commendation and favour bestowed on those righteous princes, who, when the civil and religious departments were dissevered by the establishment of the kingly government, continued to guard and advance the interests of religion, may be urged to recommend an imitation of their example.

When the Church of Christ was set up as a kingdom, to be enlarged by uncon-

* As in the case of Moses, Joshua, the Judges, Prophets, and Sanhedrim.

† Rom. ch. xv. ver. 4.

strained

strained association for spiritual purposes, it was subjected by its divine Founder and his Apostles only to spiritual authority. It was erected with no ordinances that could interfere with dominions already constituted, and with no regimen but what might consist with, and derive countenance from, existing powers.

The three orders established in conformity to apostolical appointment and directions, and classed after the departure of the Apostles under the appropriate titles of Bishops, Priests, and Deacons *, were instituted with subordination essential to good government, and with that propriety of regulation which requires superior qualifications for the superior administrations of religion. A regimen

* The primitive distinction and superiority of the episcopal order appears to be fully demonstrated by the prerogatives and jurisdiction which the Bishops exercised over the Presbytery; by their exclusive administrations, as especially that of ordaining; by the specific enumeration of the three orders as essential, and by the description of their appropriate offices in the earliest writers. The appointment was apostolical; and the records of many Churches exhibit in their first Bishops the names of persons ordained by the Apostles, besides Titus and Timothy. See the Epistles of Ignatius, passim; Irenæus, l. iii. c. 14. l. iv. c. 63; Tertull. adv. Marcion. l. iv. c. 5. He attributes the institution to St. John, Euseb. l. iii. c. 23. Hieron. Epist. lxxxv. ad Evag. Bingham. Antiq. b. ii. ch. 2.
adjusted

adjusted by inspired persons, cannot but be considered as of divine institution ; and however the service of the Church might have varied in its lower departments *, on the extension of its empire, the three principal distinctions of order, marked out with appropriation of peculiar functions, and with the assignment of especial rights of jurisdiction, in connection with Christ's promises, and confirmed by the arrangements and sanctions of the first ages, claimed a title to the permanent governance of the Church, and had a right to expect temporal homage and civil support. The admirable discipline of the primitive times, moulded in obedience to this constitution, had exhibited at least the excellency of the model, and the obligations of conforming to a pattern, which could not but be revered.

As the boundaries of the Church were enlarged, embracing districts, provinces, and kingdoms, in their extended pale, the states

* As with respect to the prophets of the New Testament, who interpreted the Scriptures, and censured the disobedient ; the Deaconness of the Eastern Church, and other inferior Ministers, as Subdeacons, Acolyths, Exorcists, &c. 1 Cor. c. xiv. ver. 29. Bingham, l. ii. c. 20.

and

and civil communities which they enclosed were naturally led to countenance, by general regulations, an œconomy which, in collective acceptance, they approved ; and which displayed no appointments of permanent and irreverfible description, but what were capable of combining with every fyftem, in which regularity and order fubfifted.

The Evangelical government, in fpreading over the provinces of the Roman world, had naturally regulated its external frame in conformity to the allotments of the feveral diftricts of that empire * ; and no farther affected the fecular dominion, than, as by controlling the paffions, and guiding the minds of men, it rendered them peaceable fubjects, and called forth virtues which confpired with the real interefts of fociety.

* In the firft period of Chriftianity each Greek and Roman city, with its fuburbicary territory, was under the government of certain magiftrates appointed from its own body, who compofed a council or fenate, fubject to one chief, ftyled Dictator, or Defenfor Civitatis ; in fuperinduction upon which, the Apoftles, or at leaft the early Preachers of the Gofpel, erected in every fuch diftrict a Prefbytery, with a Prefident, Apoftle, or Bifhop, or Angel of the Church, whofe power reached over the whole diocefe, which was often of very confiderable extent, and commenfurate with the civil jurifdiction. Titus, ch. i. ver. 5. Concil. Antioch. ix. Theodoret, Epift. xlii. & cxiii. unjuftly fufpected

ciety. It was the excellency of its character, and the testimonies of its truth, which recommended it to the acceptance of mankind; and as its influence spread, the sovereign and the legislator adopted it under their care, and supported it by their authority.

That the Heathen Emperors, to whom Christianity was presented, with its due evidence, were called upon by every religious consideration, not only to bow to it themselves as to a divine revelation, but to promote, by proper measures and temperate exertions, its general acceptance, cannot reasonably be disputed. Converts to the truth and universal importance of that religion, they were expected, as servants of the God

suspected August. Epist. lxxviii. edit. Frob. Gregor. Naz. Car. de Vit. The metropolitan bishoprics were established in the primacy of provincial towns, for central advantage and confederate government. On the new division under Constantine, the patriarchal supremacy rose, in correspondence with the new constitution of the different provinces united under one Eparch, Vicar or Prefect. See Bingham's Eccles. Antiq. b. ii. ch. i. Petrus de Marca de Concord. Sacerd. & Imper. l. vi. c. 1. When new distributions of the provinces were made by succeeding Emperors, it was sometimes provided that the ecclesiastical allotments should not be affected, as in the time of Justinian as to Armenia. *Quæ ad sacerdotia spectant volumus in eadem manere forma.* Novat. xxxi. c. 2. See Maurice's Defence of Diocesan Episcopacy.

whom

whom they were to obey *; as disciples of the faith into which they were baptized; as rulers of the people whose welfare they were to consult, to consecrate such power of countenance and protection as they might consistently exercise, to its extensive promulgation. It was only when they exerted co-

* See Pf. ii. ver. 11; upon which we may remark with St. Austin, without adopting his intolerant sentiments, that kings are required to serve the Lord by a peculiar service in their sovereign character, as did Hezekiah. Vid. Ep. 1. ad Bonifac. "If all Christians (says Thorndyke, speaking of Constantine) by their baptism do consecrate themselves to the service of God in his Church, then must he also, by being baptized, consecrate the power of the empire to the maintenance of that Christianity into which he was baptized." The succeeding sentiments are not equally just. See Preface to just Weights and Measures. Barrow argues on the position that every prince is obliged to employ the power entrusted to him to the furtherance of God's service. See Treatise on Pope's Supremacy, Supposit. v. And the composers of a part of our Liturgy were of the same opinion; since the following passage is in the beginning of a prayer in the Communion Service for the 25th of October: "Blessed Lord, who hast called Christian princes to the defence of thy faith, and hast made it their duty to promote the spiritual welfare, together with the temporal interest of their people." These principles do not militate against any just maxims of toleration, or affect the chief arguments which Mr. Locke deemed it necessary, with such diffusive repetition, to urge against the strange notions of his opponent, that force should be employed to compel people to think and examine; as far as those arguments relate to the imposition of articles of faith and forms of worship. The obligations which bind the magistrate, bind him only, to measures compatible with the spirit of religion and the welfare of society. If by the magistrate we understand the executive power, it should be exercised in religious matters only for the preservation of regulations enacted by the state, and not for the enforcing of the establishment of them.

ercise

ercive and persecuting authority, that they erred; since these were inconsistent with the interests of the society, and in violation of the instructions of religion, and were not indeed calculated to promote the cause of that God who is to be worshipped in sincerity, but to extort a feigned and spurious profession of faith *.

Upon the same principles, of a duty pressing with peculiar force on the sovereign, "of strengthening others" when converted, will the temporal princes of the earth be universally pledged, on the acceptance of Christianity, to contribute, by suitable endeavours, to the general establishment of that religion among their subjects. The theories which have tended to restrict the views, and to narrow the

* St. Austin, in his Epistle to Vincentius, informs us, that, though he had been averse to coercive measures, he had been led to change his opinion, when it was urged to him, that his own city, which had consisted only of Donatists, had been brought to Catholic union by the terror of the Imperial laws: that is, to a nominal profession of orthodoxy. It must be lamented, that a principle so detestable and pregnant with mischief should derive any countenance from the authority of this pious writer. Epist. xlviii. Whatever indirect or accidental conversions may have accrued from compulsive conformity, they will furnish no sufficient apology for the exertion of a coercive power. The Christian emperors were unhappily led to intolerance, in subverting the complicated interests of the Pagan religion, which were interwoven with all the civil regulations of society. Christianity however sufficiently exposed the absurdity of the Heathen theology; and its temples might have been left to moulder into ruins by neglect.

duties

duties of the governors of society, have been limited by the contemplation of the civil magistrate in his abstract character, without regard to that relation in which he stands towards God, or attention to the existence of any powers but those of coercion *. The duties which expand from that relation embrace the whole interests of the community, temporal and spiritual; and though with necessary distinction it must be admitted, that the peculiar and appropriate province of the civil power is confined to the present regulation of society; yet, to prevent the suppression of religious considerations, it must be remembered, that the civil power cannot exist in real life in any persons who are free from

* It must be observed, that this discussion originates only in a desire to vindicate the motives that should operate to the acceptance of Christianity. It is admitted, that the civil magistrate, abstractedly considered, should not interfere; that coercive powers should not be exerted: but we must not therefore conclude that the civil magistrate, as representing the governors of society or the state, is not bounden to support the real interests of religion; a notion which seems insensibly to have prevailed, from the incautious manner in which the term civil magistrate has been employed, and which, while it was well designed to discountenance intolerance and compulsion in religious matters, has appeared to resolve all concern for religion into the apathy or indifference of state policy. The arguments employed by Bishop Warburton to invalidate this obligation, apply only to the magistrate in his abstract executive character, as acting without the consent of the majority of the community. See his Treatise on the Test Law, Divin. Legat. b. iii.

sacred

sacred obligations, to facilitate the advancement and influence of religion, by such advantages as they may lawfully employ, in consistency with their delegated trust, and the interests of the community.

It may tend to accuracy of conception, and agreement of opinion upon this subject, if, adopting the term of civil magistrate as expressive of the civil power, we represent it under two points of view, in order to illustrate the duties which attach to it under each character.

The civil magistrate, considered as an absolute sovereign, may be stated, in conformity with the preceding remarks, as bounden, on the acceptance of Christianity, to promote the publication of it in his own dominions, by maintaining and protecting its ministers. He is not authorised to enforce its propagation by the sword, which falsehood and imposture have wielded, or by violence of any kind; nor even to establish it as the national religion, with civil sanctions and endowments, till accepted by a predominant and respectable part of his subjects*.

If,

* Bishop Warburton says, that no particular scheme or mode of religion is under the care of the magistrate, as magistrate, till he has compacted for the purpose. Alliance, p. 41. Certainly no form

If, under a second point of view, we consider the civil magistrate as the representative of the community, expressing the will and acting by the powers of the State, he is unquestionably called upon by revelation, to accept Christianity; to erect it with formal ratification and public institutions; to provide for its ministers with competent maintenance, and to preserve its establishment by arrangements adapted to its character, and consistent with the general welfare of his subjects.

Admitting, as we may do, the distinct and peculiar design of religion as to the principal object of its care; allowing that its jurisdiction respects the soul, and aims at the re-

form of establishment is properly within his province till adopted by the State. The State is bounden by obligations to God to accept of that form which it conceives to be most consistent with the promotion of truth, and the maintenance of religion; but the civil magistrate can have no arbitrary right to impose his own system. Charles the First could not have been blamed for proposing and recommending the establishment of episcopacy to Scotland, if he had confined himself to the experiment of its being approved by the nation. He offended as much against religion as policy, when he persisted in endeavours to establish it in opposition to the determined sentiments of his subjects in that country. However the sovereign may hesitate at accepting the guardianship of a system which he individually disapproves, he certainly must maintain a delegated trust upon the principles to which he is pledged; a rule, by departure from which James the Second justly lost his kingdom, and by the observance of which the king of England governs Scotland and Canada.

H

gulation

gulation of the body, only so far as the soul is concerned; admitting also, that the civil power, in its abstract description, is restricted in the exercise of its authority to the direction of the external conduct of men, we still may maintain an universal obligation on the community, and on the governor representing the sense of the majority of that community, to adopt and support religion, as a law revealed by a Supreme Being *. The result of which will be an union or alliance of two powers, both emanating from a Divine source; both originally exercised by the same persons; both conspiring in some general views; and both

* Mr. Plowden, who in his late publication fairly ascertains the general line of discrimination between the temporal and spiritual powers, appears to maintain exceptionable positions, when he asserts that the duties of the civil magistrate were not altered by the communication of Christianity; and that they are such only as the light and law of nature will instruct and enable him to perform. The magistrate is certainly as much bounden to respect the laws of revelation as those of nature; and their tendency to promote the welfare of society is equally strong. The civil power indeed is not authorised to control the conscience, by imposing Divine revelation or dogmatical opinions; but neither is it authorised to enforce the acceptance of many principles of the law of nature. The magistrate is bound to reverence and promote the observance of the laws both of nature and revelation, by exertions consistent with their spirit; not to enforce the speculative principles of either, by coercion, though to check and punish external violation of them, where they affect the welfare of society. See Church and State, b. i. c. 7.

capable,

capable, while they preserve their respective limits, of promoting the present welfare of mankind; extending their protection over society, like the cherubim which overspread the Mercy-seat of the Tabernacle; their faces looking one to another, and stretching out their golden wings till they join at their extremities*.

The necessity for this union does not originate, in the first instance, from the consideration of the conveniences and mutual benefit which must result from the compact, but from the religious duty which applies to society, to receive a Gospel committed to all; a duty pressing on the aggregate body with collective effect, upon the same principles as those with which it bears upon the individual; since nothing can dispense the community at large from an obligation by which every member composing that community is bounden; and since “the nation and kingdom that will not serve” Christ “shall perish, and be utterly wasted†.”

The blessings which arise from the connection, are blessings of inestimable value.

* 1 Kings, ch. vi. ver. 27, 28.

† Isaiah, ch. lx. ver. 12.

They are subjects of cheerful reflection, and should tend to strengthen the relation, and to endear the tie ; but they are not the primary arguments and inducements to the formation of it. The theories therefore, which are designed to shew the necessity and equity of an established religion, from the essence and end of civil society, and upon the fundamental principles merely of the law of nature and nations, however they may demonstrate such necessity and equity, do not avail themselves of the highest ground *. They debase the motives of adoption, and represent religion as an engine to be subjected to the employment of state-policy. They subvert the proper

* Warburton, in his ingenious work of the Alliance, in which criticism, undeterred by the decisions of partial friendship, has discovered much false and inconsistent argument, seems fundamentally to have erred, by representing what are *the effects* of an union between Church and State, to have been the *original and only motives* for its formation, and by reasoning upon the abstract idea of a state with no consideration of it as it exists : a society of persons whose religious duties cannot be superseded by a political union. The fiction of an alliance might have been usefully employed to illustrate the advantages which result from a connection between Church and State, and the line which should be preserved by each in the connection ; but it should not have been grounded on the assertion, that the State is influenced to the conjunction by no motives but those of political expediency : much elaborate reasoning is built on false premises, and the learned writer is often betrayed into palpable contradictions.

and

and secure foundation on which the arguments for the conjunction should be built; that of the indispensable obligation of accepting a Divine law; a duty to be evaded only upon the presumption of hesitation as to the evidence of the law which professeth a Divine authority; a presumption extremely injurious to the authentic and exclusive testimonies of Christianity.

It should be farther observed, that as the adoption of religion by the State, if it be not absolutely necessary to the preservation of the existence and purity of religion, and also to the well-being and prosperity of society, is yet extremely conducive to those objects, there is sufficient ground to urge the duty of the State to promote such adoption: first, because, upon the highest motives of reverence to God, it is right to contribute to the preservation of the existence and purity of religion*; and secondly, because, upon a subordinate consideration very generally respected,

* Warburton maintains, that the alliance between Church and State is necessary to preserve the purity, and even the being of religion, as well as to secure the welfare of the State; and yet contends that the only motive which influences the State to promote the preservation of that being and purity, proceeds from a regard to civil utility, p. 96. note; which is not true, if we consider the State as a society of persons bound to obey God's laws.

it is incumbent on the State, or its representative, to promote by all reasonable means the welfare and happiness of society on solid and permanent principles *.

If the private opinions which have mingled themselves with the acceptance of the Christian faith, and the intemperate passions which have been kindled with the zeal for its establishment, have disgraced the temporal powers which have engaged in the pretended cause of religion, they do not invalidate the general

* Warburton, with the alledged countenance of Aristotle, from the supposed origin of civil society, conceives government to have been designed only for a remedy against evil, and that happiness was a secondary consideration. Whether it be a first or secondary consideration, however, there appears to be no reason to dispute that the present object of civilized society is to attain all possible good that may be procured on sure principles. The learned author denies that civil government can enforce the sanction of rewards; understanding by rewards such as are conferred on every one for observing the laws of his country. Upon similar ground he might have maintained that government has not the sanction of punishment, because offenders sometimes escape; and he by no means overthrows the position, maintained from the time of Solon to the present day, that the sanction of rewards is one pillar of the civil government, agreeably to the representation of St. Paul, whom he quotes partially; since the sacred writer states that governors are sent by God "for the praise of them that do well," equally as for the "punishment of evil doers;" and gives no countenance, in the misapplied text from 1 Timothy, ch. i. ver. 9. to Warburton's confined views of the end of civil government. Ergo hæc respublica censetur bona quæ tota collimat, intentaque est in utilitatem civium, quo felicem vitam degere queant. Cornel. Bertram. Præf. ad Rem. Ebræor.

position,

position, that the State is bound to adopt Christianity, and that the temporal powers are bound to countenance it, by regulations consistent with its temperate design—to promote, not to impose its acceptance. The principle must not be sacrificed, though abuses may have resulted from the assumption of it, without the qualifications which define its limits. In its restricted application it can give no sanction to intolerance*; but, on the contrary, tends to regulate a conviction, which cannot be destroyed, and which ever has, and ever will operate on the conscience of those who act under religious impressions, and upon the supposition of the energy of which our legislature has uniformly contrived its tests and exclusions.

From the obligation thus stated, as binding on the sovereign, or the community to
adopt

* Warburton professes to expose the absurd reasoning of those, who, thinking an establishment to be of Divine right, defend it on the doctrine of intolerance: but it does not appear that more sanction is given to intolerance by those who assert the necessity of an established religion from motives of religious consideration, than by those who maintain that necessity from the essence and end of civil society, upon fundamental principles of natural religion; representing doctrines which relate to the being of God, his providence, and the natural and essential difference between moral good and evil, to be within the province of the magistrate. The motives for

adopt religion, and to promote its influence, results the propriety of its establishment with national functions; and with such appointments for its discipline and service, as are congenial to its spirit, and calculated to advance its design. Its institutions, erected on the presumption of the concurrence of the majority, or representative body of the State, are properly protected by the care of the civil magistrate; though every coercive power, which on received principles of toleration he is entitled to exercise, must result from the manifest necessity of supporting the public regulations which the legislature has approved; and should be restricted in its exertion by the exact rule of such defensive operation; and notwithstanding the civil and spiritual powers be in consequence united in maintenance of the system, it is necessary, for the honour and design of religion, as well as for the peace and happiness of society, that they should

the adoption of religion, in neither case, and perhaps less so in the former than in the latter, justify the setting up of, or the maintenance of a national religion upon principles subversive of the peace of society. Rousseau, as Mr. Plowden has remarked, with equal encouragement to intolerance, maintained that the sovereign might insist on the external observance of respect to the doctrines of one omniscient and all-provident God, of a future life, and the sanctity of the social contract.

continue

continue to act as strictly as possible in the lines of their respective jurisdiction *.

The subject existing under such establishment, is held by every social principle to reverence it at least as the legitimate constitution of the country; and though his conscience should not suffer him to conform to the collective decision, as to its declarations of faith, or expression of religious service, he can have no right to disturb its appointments, or to refuse his contribution to the general allotments for its support †. He must necessarily forego the advantages which result from employments requiring confidence; and has every indulgence compatible with the preservation of

* *Reges sæcularibus, pontifices spiritualibus ordinandis sese impendunt, quamdiu neutra potestatum in alienos limites insiliat, mutuâ concordia res Christiana amplificabitur. Marca, lib. ii. c. i.*

† Neal asserts, that Hooker's proposition of the obligation to submit to the ecclesiastical laws of the established Church, into which we are baptized, is inconsistent with the principles of the Reformation. Must I, says this prejudiced and unfair writer, be at Rome a Papist? &c. Hooker however did not mean to impose a local faith, but to contend for submission to laws ratified by just authority. See *Hist. of Puritans*, Vol. I. b. viii. and *Eccles. Polit.* b. vii. Our Saviour, it has been observed, paid the civil tribute, of which a part was applied to the support of idolatry; and the Romanists are, without intolerance, required to take the oath of allegiance, and to maintain the Protestant succession.

the

the establishment, if he be tolerated in the exercise of a worship separately erected, and be allowed by temperate argument to recommend his opinions.

Where there is no national establishment, the peace and security of government must result from the multiplicity and equipoise of different sects ; since every sect having a decided ascendancy, will naturally endeavour to substantiate its discipline by the respectability of public appointments, however in depression it may murmur at the distinctions which they must occasion.

Christianity, though it rose into estimation independently of human aid, may reasonably accept of such support as is furnished in consistency with its spirit. Proud as it may be of having triumphed by its own vigour, in defiance of earthly frowns, there is no argument that it should reject the countenance of the great. Its native energy once ascertained, it detracts not from its praise, that, when miraculous support was withdrawn, its maintenance and propagation was to be assisted by secondary and ordinary means favourable to its prosperity, and affording occasion for the display of holy reverence and attachment.

The Ministers of the Gospel, on the positive

tive declarations of sacred authority *, may claim some support, as the recompence of those spiritual labours which they undertake; though they may be content to wave every title to a specific mode of provision, but what results from an established possession of that proportion which the State hath deliberately approved, upon judicious and important considerations, and with deference to an example and precedent of Divine appointment †.

The propriety of an assignment on some fixed principles cannot but be obvious. In the first ardour of inspired zeal the appointed Apostles and delegated servants of Christ were found ready to engage in the propagation of that faith which they had embraced; and the pious gratitude of those, who reaped the fruits of their spiritual industry, was equally ready to allot the sheaves of the earthly harvest for their support: but when the awful and impressive testimonies of a Divine commission no longer continued to excite the public veneration, it became necessary that more permanent maintenance should be supplied than

* Matt. ch. x. ver. 10. Luke, ch. x. ver. 7. 1 Cor. ch. ix. ver. 1—15. Gal. ch. vi. ver. 6. 2 Thess. ch. iii. ver. 9. 1 Tim. ch. v. ver. 17, 18.

† See an Essay on the Revenues of the Church of England.

what

what might be derived from the capricious and fluctuating spirit of voluntary benevolence. The Ministers of the Gospel could not be expected, in every state of society, to dedicate themselves to unwearied exertions, if they were to depend merely on gratuitous offerings; and their character must have sunk from independency and rectitude, in proportion as it became necessary to comply with prevailing opinions; and to court popular favour for that contribution, which, however liberally and judiciously it may be furnished in small societies, or by sects struggling for pre-eminence, can conduce in general but to expose religion to the danger of being made subservient to worldly purposes.

The motives by which the state is bounden to adopt religion, and to support it by civil sanction, being thus vindicated, it may be expedient to shew that the operation of these motives is not necessarily productive of prejudice, either to religion or to the state; and that the evils which have been represented to flow from the conjunction are either falsely ascribed to it, or of little importance when viewed in competition with the advantages which must be derived from the union.

If, waving all historical enquiry upon this subject,

subject, we were to confine our attention to theory, it would be obvious to remark, that what appears to be the natural consequence of the propagation of Christianity, and agreeable to the design of God, as far as we can collect from general reasoning and attention to his revealed will, could not have any tendency necessarily hostile to religion or society; and that whatever inconvenience may have sprung from the alliance, must have proceeded from the erroneous principles upon which it was regulated, and can furnish no just argument against the general propriety and advantage of a civil establishment of religion.

Those who, with avowed or concealed aversion to establishments, represent the commencement of the decay of Christianity to have been coeval with the time of the adoption of it, with secular support by Constantine, seem not to have adverted to the many causes of corruption which had begun to operate previously to that period, in a Church built indeed on the virtues of its first professors; and make no allowance for those fugitive and evanescent circumstances which overshadowed distant ages; though they have left no ascertained effects of their malignant influence.

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The noxious tares of heresy were sown by the enemy, together with the scattering of the good seed; the chaff of human error was mixed, with the earliest gatherings of the Gospel. Long at least before the time of Constantine had the allurements of earthly objects * seduced the followers of the cross, which he erected, it is true, with too dazzling ornaments †. It may be allowed, indeed, that the prodigal munificence with which he decorated the Church, raised from dejection; the sudden splendour with which he invested the lowly Ministers, whom he had rescued from “great tribulation ‡;” the dangerous immunities and privileges § which he and his successors

* See preceding Discourse, and particularly Euseb. Hist. Ecclef. l. viii. c. 1. l. iv. c. 22. l. v. c. 20. as cited by Dr. Eveleigh, and the account of Paul of Samosata in Euseb. l. vii. c. 30.

† Euseb. de Vit. Constant. l. i. c. 30. Helena, the mother of Constantine, was the first who gave rise to the worship of the cross, which afterwards degenerated into idolatry; by erecting magnificent Churches in honour of the actual cross of Christ, which she professed to have discovered at Jerusalem, in a manner of which Socrates gives an account very remarkable, but, according to the opinion of Lowth, entitled to credit. See also Sulpit. Sever. and Jortin, Vol. II. p. 238.

‡ Rev. ch. vii. ver. 14.

§ Constantine allowed an appeal from the civil courts to the Bishops, whose sentence was to be valid, and superior to the decrees of the judges, as much as if it had been pronounced by the Emperor himself; and was to be executed by the rulers of the

successors conceded to them; the sources of unrestrained wealth which were opened*, and the incentives to emulation, which were raised by too partial favour, did conspire to accelerate the influence of corruption. The attraction of imperial patronage, and the terror of the imperial sceptre †, contributed to multiply the crowds of unworthy and unweaned converts; and the lustre of that faith which had shone brightly in a contracted

the provinces and his officers. The Emperor refused to take cognizance of some crimes alledged against Bishops, and left them to the judgment of the Clergy. Sozom. Hist. l. i. c. 9. Decret. p. ii. Caus. 115. q. 1. c. 41. Euseb. Hist. & de Vit. Constant.

* It appears that the Christian Ministers of Constantinople had as yet assumed no external splendour, since Eusebius describes the Bishops, whom Constantine wished to raise in the estimation of the people, as clothed in poor attire, consistently with the accounts of Ammianus Marcellinus, and of Gregory Nazianzen, speaking of himself, and St. Basil. Euseb. de Vit. Constant. l. vi. c. 42. cum notis Vales. Edit. Reading. Constantine might have confirmed the property before annexed to the Church, and have established it with liberal appointments, without injury to religion; but he opened flood-gates of evil, when he suffered devotion to pour in unlimited treasures, by unrestrained grants and testamentary bequests.

† The Constitution of Constantine and Licinius, published at Milan about A. D. 313, conceded a general toleration upon the most liberal principles, and attributed the tranquillity then enjoyed, to indulgence. Euseb. l. x. c. 5. It would have been honourable to the professors of the Gospel, and happy for the world, if the same Christian principles had continued to operate. Vid. Euseb. in Vit. Constant. l. iii. c. 63. Cod. Theod. l. xvi. tit. 10. l. iv. & xii.

circle,

circle, was weakened by diffusion, and glimmered only with the scattered and uncertain rays which it continued, though with diminished glory, to emit. But what argument can thence be drawn against such liberal and discreet appointments, as may indicate becoming reverence ; and such competent and permanent provision as may secure independency and encouragement to the labourers in a spiritual service ?

If a provision were not made adequate for the support of a Ministry, sufficient as to number to preach to the poor as to the rich, and respectable as to qualifications for the attainment of learning, Christianity would insensibly sink into disregard with the general classes of society, and become the subject of rare and speculative discussion. Its complicated evidence, contained in remote records and languages, known only to the instructed ; its prophecies, interwoven with accounts of ancient history and its doctrines, deducible from laborious collation, would be considered only by the studious in silent enquiry ; and its instructions, descriptive of the Divine attributes, and impressive of religious obligations, would be admired only in abstracted contemplation : whereas that evidence, when
presented

presented with frequent demonstration to public attention, and those doctrines inculcated in familiar exposition, bring forward religion to general regard and observance. Its institutions, set up with national sanction, are viewed with habitual reverence; its worship, expressed by exterior acts of celebration, is performed with social concord, and its maxims, imbibed by daily hearing, assimilate with the principles of our conduct, and meliorate the character of our thoughts, words, and actions.

If it be stated, that indolence is the result of security, and that the exertions of an established Ministry may be deadened in the confidence of protection*, it is an argument deduced from the consideration of a partial hypothesis; and to have any weight, must suppose the suppression of hostility, which ever calls for vigilance, and the distribution of ap-

* Hume states the advantage of establishment to be, to bribe the indolence of spiritual guides, by assigning stated salaries to their profession; and rendering it superfluous to be farther active than merely to prevent their flock from straying in quest of new pastures. The sarcastic historian might have reflected, that activity cannot retain the flock in the old pastures, unless they are preserved in a state of perfection superior to that of the new. Hist. of England, ch. xxix.

pointments so equal, as to supersede every secular encouragement to emulation. It must also harshly suppose in men, whose minds have been awakened to every serious motive and solemn obligation, an indifference to every consideration which they have professed. Calculated as is the national establishment of some approved system, to prevent by its stability the endless vibration of uncertain interests, and the mutual intolerance of sects ruling with transient and anxious triumph, it can by no means still the strictures or repress the jealous complaints of those who are ever eager to expose its defects, and insult over its unworthy members.

The evils then which have resulted from the injudicious and extravagant favour bestowed at different times on the Church, by no means outweigh the great and solid advantages which have been urged; and they certainly furnish no just argument against a civil establishment of religion, as supported in agreement with the principles of the Reformation in this country. The excellency of those principles may be vindicated upon the strong and important ground of their tendency to effectuate such advantages in an
eminent

eminent degree, from their consistency with the design of revelation, and their conformity to the character and discipline of the early Church.

It was a favourable effect of the peculiar views of Henry, that, while his resentment urged him to break down the tower of that usurpation which had been raised above the structure of the Christian Church, he had no wish to destroy the original form of its edifice. Its principal supports were preserved uninjured; its ancient pillars remained unshaken. The appointments of that order by which all things in heaven and earth are kept in harmony; which were regulated with simple distinctions and appropriate functions; and which were endowed with privileges adapted to the genius of our constitution, continued to consolidate the well-compacted frame of spiritual and civil government. Monastic institutions and their dependencies, the prime intention and ancient utility of which were destroyed in the general corruption of their establishments, were, (with indiscriminate violence and unjust spoliation it must be admitted,) suppressed *. Those unendowed orders,

† Witness Malverne and Godstow. Cranmer refused to consent to the application of the revenues of the suppressed establishments,
I. 2.

orders, whose ambitious intrigues and officious services had been craftily employed in support of former superstition *, were abolished ; but the episcopal form of government, with its suitable appendages and subordinate institutions, resting on its ancient rights and jurisdiction, and privileges, still maintained its degrees in due dependency of rank ; distributing its members through every department of society, preserving in its elevation a lustre that commands respect, and descending in its humility wherever ignorance and abasement demand its care.

Notwithstanding the unjust alienations and embezzlement of the ecclesiastical revenues which the Church sustained, to the deplorable impoverishment of some of its labo-

lishments to the king's use. Latimer interceded particularly with Cromwell for Malverne, that it might be allowed to stand ; " not in monkery, but so as to be converted to preaching, study, " and prayer. Alas, my good lord, says he, shall we not see " two or three in every shire changed to such a remedy ? " The imperious wants however, and sturdy determination of Henry, were not to be resisted ; though the Parliament reluctantly yielded to the menaces of the king, who had the assurance afterwards to assert in his speech to the Parliament, that the spoil had been committed to him without his desire, and promised to employ it well, towards the support of the poor, and the advancement of learning. See Spelman. Hist.

* Warburton has observed, that the religious orders of the Church of Rome who had no endowment, were the persons who got possession of the power of the Church. Almost all nations have deemed an establishment to be necessary.

rious

rious and inferior departments; the liberal assignment reserved to the general appointments of the establishment, swelling in proportion with the increasing value of the requisites of life, certainly secured the Clergy from the necessity of unworthy contrivance; and from that servile dependence on the sovereign, or that precarious reliance on the people, which in different countries had equally tended to degrade the sacred character; rendering the servants of Christ sometimes the slaves of arbitrary power, and sometimes the zealous abettors of faction and intrigue *. Where they have since been unreasonably biassed, and have countenanced principles unfavourable to genuine liberty, it has been the effect of involuntary error; or of such influence and inducements as no regulations could utterly remove, and which seem indeed to be as effectually counteracted, as perhaps by any arrangement could be accomplished by the multiplicity of channels into which the ecclesiastical patronage of the country is distributed †.

An establishment so constituted as to have

* See Lord Molesworth's Account of Denmark, ch. xvi.

† If a patronage, distributed into royal and episcopal departments; among colleges; civil and ecclesiastical corporations; and individuals, be not properly disposed of, what arrangement can be adopted?

no interest but in maintaining that dignity which results from the preservation and advancement of truth, could not but be calculated to promote the influence of Christianity. The passions and evil imaginations of men, inflamed by the suggestion of the apostate spirit, might still continue to resist its evidence and to reject its precepts; but still that evidence and those precepts, renewed with regular enforcement, must produce effects of beneficial operation, discernible by those who should take a comprehensive view of life, and allow for the obstructions and unfavourable circumstances which impede their tendency. Human wisdom can contrive nothing, better calculated to advance the true interests of religion, than by providing for its general and sincere promulgation; and it would be difficult to shew by what means the constant preaching of the Word would be secured so effectually as by the support of a regular ministry, duly educated and appointed to their office; maintained with competent endowment; and with such appointments, as, while they furnish general independence, keep alive the spirit of emulation.

When the doctrines of the national faith
were

were specified in precise articles, the character of the Church, which the State designed to protect, was fully defined. It was a necessary condition of the connection which was to subsist, that every change which the conviction of an enlightened nation might demand in the progress of the Reformation, should be ratified by the representative deliberation of the people, before it could be entitled to the civil countenance and sanction which it claimed. The futility of those reflexions is therefore manifest, which would disparage the Reformation by representing it as the changing work of political contrivance; since it is certain that the legislative powers of the State interfered in the restoration of truth, not as spiritual guides, but as expressing the sense of the community, as to the description of the improving principles which it designed to accept, and as to the civil sanctions with which it was disposed to ratify their establishment. The legitimate interpreters of the sacred Word were consulted, and generally first deposed the doctrines of the Scriptures which were restored*; but they professed no infallible authority in expounding them; and

* Heylin. Hist. of Presbyter.

the assent of the Laity, regularly declared, was requisite to signify their approbation of the principles that were to become articles of their faith, and the boundaries of the Church which was to call for their support. The doctrines thus ratified furnish to future generations the character of that establishment which claims their protection ; and every variation in that character must continue to require the sanction of the power which imparts its protection to a specific Church.

The stern injunctions* delivered by the State, to impose on the subject a strict conformity to the worship and institutions of the national Church, in the earlier periods of its independency †, were, if viewed distinctly from political considerations, apparently in-

* It is not meant to censure the operation of those injunctions which respected the ministry, who were certainly to obey the directions of the rulers of the established Church, or to relinquish their preferment ; as some did in the reign of Queen Elizabeth, to the number of 200, or 243, as other accounts state.

† The statutes of 1 Eliz. c. 2. 23 Eliz. c. 1, 2. 25 Eliz. c. 2. 29 Eliz. c. 6. 35 Eliz. c. 1. 1 Edw. VI. c. 2. 2 and 3 Edw. VI. c. 21. 3 Jac. c. 4, 5. 21 Jac. c. 28. 22 Car. II. c. 1. 13 and 14 Car. II. c. 4. enjoined conformity to the service and rites of the Church, under pain of increasing pecuniary mulcts, imprisonment and banishment. A small fine, imposing attendance on some kind of public worship, might probably be justified ; but some of these were excessive, and allowed no freedom of conscience.

compatible

compatible with the genuine spirit of Christianity; and inconsistent with those rights of a conscientious and unfettered reason, which were so fully asserted by the general spirit of the Reformation. True it is that they were but seldom enforced; but still, as they were impressed with the seal of severity, they have been repealed, or virtually suppressed, under the influence of those peculiar maxims of liberal toleration, upon which the Church of England is at present maintained*. The decided support now given to the national Church, though it preserves the community from reeling with every change, pretends not to uphold an establishment which shall survive the conviction of its excellency in the majority of the people.

Disclaiming all control over the consciences of men, the legislature admits an unrestrained profession of faith, and an unmolested, nay a

* 1 W. & M. stat. 1. c. 18. confirmed by 19 G. III. c. 44. stat. 10. Ann. c. 2. suspended penal laws against dissenters (except oppugners of the Trinity), who should take the oaths of allegiance and supremacy, and subscribe to the declaration against popery, and certify their place of public meeting to the Bishop, Archdeacon, or Justice. Some obsolete penalties and disabilities still remain, by laws, which it is better to neglect than to repeal. See the arguments on Lord Stanhope's bill, proposed in 1789. See also the Articles of Union, 5 Ann, c. 8.

protected,

protected, exercise of every kind of worship*. It restricts not freedom of enquiry; it prohibits not the sober discussion of any speculative doctrine; though it vindicates the majesty of the Supreme Being, and the acknowledged revelation of his laws from contumely and reproach†; and with temperate and proportioned punishment inflicts civil penalties, and precludes from civil privileges those apostate miscreants, who, with daring rejection of all religion, or direct attacks on Christianity and its fundamental doctrines, would destroy the principal springs on which social security depends‡.

From

* 1 W. & M.

† 1 Hawk. p. 6, 7. 1 Vent. 293. 2 Strange, 834, as quoted by Blackstone, b. vi. c. 4.

‡ In consequence of the licentious abuse of the toleration, restored towards the close of the last century, it was enacted, with the moderation of mitigated laws, by stat. 9 & 10 of W. III. that if any person educated in, or having made profession of the Christian religion, should by writing, preaching, teaching, or advised speaking, deny the Christian religion to be true, or the holy Scriptures to be of Divine authority, he should, upon the first offence, be declared incapable to hold any office or place of trust, and for the second be rendered incapable of bringing any action, being guardian, executor, legatee, or purchaser of lands, and should suffer three years imprisonment without bail: still however, with indulgent consideration it is provided, that if within four months after the first conviction the delinquent will, in open court, publicly renounce, he is discharged for that once from all disabilities. Blackstone's Com. b. iv. c. 4. By the same statute, if any person educated in the Christian religion, or professing the same, shall by writing, teaching, or advised

From those who undertake to preach the doctrines of the National Church as of a congregation of the faithful, the legislature, desirous of preventing diversity of opinions, where union and consistency are so important, naturally demands a test of uniformity, an assurance of concordant sentiment *; and therefore requires subscription to its articles, framed in conformity to early practice, as presumed standards of orthodoxy, and as the creed and avowed profession of its faith. From those whom it admits to offices of trust and power, it reasonably stipulates for some proofs and pledges of regard to the combined interests of Church and State, and some security against suspected and often blended designs of religious and political hostility †; in conviction of the invariable operation of the wish to subvert those principles which

vised speaking, deny any one of the persons in the holy Trinity to be God, he shall undergo the same penalties. Religious impostors are also punishable by temporal courts, as they tend to overthrow all religion, and affect the security of government. The penalties are mildly and reluctantly inflicted: they indicate a due reverence for religion, but are not employed to discourage the discussion of any question that may lead to the investigation of truth.

* 1 Eliz. c. 12. 13 & 14 Car. II. c. 4. 5 Ann. c. 8. can. 36.

† Statut. 13 Car. II. Stat. 2 c. 1. Stat. 25 Car. II. c. 2,

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the conscience condemns, and to establish those which it approves. Regretting however the eventual effect of partial exclusions of the subject from honours and emoluments, of general emulation, extending to the prejudice of conscientious men *; and lamenting the seductive influence of temptation to occasional or pretended conformity, it would willingly adopt any criterion that could be suggested, equally efficacious, to secure the civil and ecclesiastical polity of the country. It mitigates the operation of its laws, and with impartial regard to the claims and advantage of every description of men, apportions its indulgence to its confidence in their known principles and views †.

That

* Opinions will vary as to the extent of the necessity of imposing tests; but the only just principle upon which they can be enforced, is the preservation of the integrity and security of the establishment. It may be observed, that Mr. Plowden seems, by a partial extract, to have in one respect inadvertently placed in false light the tendency of Mr. Paley's reasoning on this subject; who in observing that he perceives no reason why men of different religious persuasions may not sit upon the same bench, deliberate in the same council, or fight in the same ranks, speaks only of the operation of discordancy in religious opinions, and not of the political inexpediency of excluding from those departments persons who might affect the security of the establishment. Church and State, b. iii. ch. 3.

† The political principles generally, connected with the creed and interests of the Papists, and the serious grounds of complaint

That the legislature should not risk the safety of the ecclesiastical government, by relinquishing regulations of experience and circumspection to the vague profession of clamorous and interested discontent; and that it should not contract the circles of defence by the demolition of every outward bulwark, described as offensive by those who would profit by its destruction, is but the caution of a salutary prudence. That it should not suffer the ordinances of its Church to be reviled or despised with impunity*, or its appointments to be disparaged † or obstructed by detraction and contemptuous ridicule, is but

complaint and alarm which they furnished by their opinions and conduct, were the causes of the severities which they have experienced. Such mitigations as are compatible with the safety of the country have been extended to them, especially by 18, 20, and 31 of Geo. III. with a liberality respecting every conscientious scruple; and they will continue to receive, as they shall be found to merit, indulgence, and as causes of distrust shall be removed.

* 1 Edw. VI. c. 1. and 1 Eliz. c. 1. which enact fine and imprisonment against revilers of the Sacrament; 1 Eliz. c. 2. which decrees penalties of a similar description against those who speak in derogation or contempt of the Book of Common Prayer. Blackstone says, that the terror of these laws (for they seldom or ever were executed) proved a principal means, under Providence, of preserving the purity as well as decency of our national worship.

† Statute 1 Car. I. c. 1. 29 Car. II. c. 7. for preventing by fine the profanation of the Lord's day; see also 1 Geo. I. against swearing.

the

the temperate provision of a discreet authority, and what every state which would countenance a religious establishment must adopt*.

The line of forbearance is drawn with the strictest regard to freedom of conscience, and intolerance is buried in our country, never again, we trust, to rise.

The Roman hierarchy erred in the arbitrary imposition of its decrees on the State. We consider the State as it were a part of the Church, and invite it to a joint acceptance of regulations, adopted with equal and consenting regard to the interests of religion and society. The establishment rests on the basis of the general approbation, confirmed by experience of advantages long enjoyed. If it have its defects, striking with the magnitude of present evil, they should not mislead us to disparage its comparative merits, far beyond competition as they are; or to forget that in all human constitutions somewhat of possible excellence must be sacrificed to practical expediency.

The inadequate and disproportioned provi-

* The directory was supported by an ordinance in 1645, which subjected those who wrote in derogation of it to a discretionary fine, not exceeding 50*l*. Blackstone's Com. b. iv. c. 4.

sion

sion for the humbler, though equally important stations of the Church, cannot but be lamented, on the most serious and interesting principles; in reflecting on the degraded consequence, the curtailed power, and not seldom the scanty and embarrassed subsistence of the diligent and distinguished pastors of the Church. Considerable are the difficulties which obstruct the remedy; considerable, but not, we trust, insuperable. While thus they operate, the merit, which is inadequately recompensed, must recollect, that no system could distribute its equal rewards to all; that none could annihilate the influence of partial friendship or erroneous preference. It will recollect, that an establishment, of which the greatest defect is that it cannot remunerate the services of all its members, but exhibits the character of all human dispensations. Weighing its own deserts, not by the fallacious estimate of self-love, but with the humility that induceth content, and stimulateth to disinterested service, it will look to that recompence which no partial sentence will decree—no unequal allotment disturb.

SERMON

S E R M O N I V.

JOHN XX. 21, 22, 23.

Then said Jesus to them again, Peace be unto you. As my Father hath sent me, even so send I you. And when he had said this, he breathed on them, and saith unto them, Receive ye the Holy Ghost. Whose-soever sins ye remit, they are remitted unto them; and whose-soever sins ye retain, they are retained.

THIS solemn delegation of the highest authority was imparted by Christ to his Apostles, after his resurrection from the grave, when he bestowed, in final benediction, the perfect charter and ratification of a Divine commission, and transferred to them the earthly government of his kingdom; in words which seem to import the deputation of the same power which he had received

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from

from the Father, when he “ made himself
 “ of no reputation, and took upon him the
 “ form of a servant * ;” being invested with
 an office, to be fulfilled in the subserviency and
 obedience of the human nature. The com-
 munication was accompanied with the gift of
 the Holy Ghost, whose guidance was essential-
 ly and indispensably necessary to direct the em-
 ployment of such important authority as ap-
 pears to have been entrusted to the Apostles,
 when assured that “ whose-soever sins they re-
 “ mitted should be remitted,” and “ whose-so-
 “ ever sins they retained should be retained :”
 since the words lead us to understand no less
 than the conveyance of a judicial right to de-
 cide on the remission or retainment of sins, as
 to their final consequences and reward.

For the illustration of the full extent of the
 commission thus consigned to the Apostles, it
 may be expedient to consider what powers
 were exercised by Christ in the ordinary dis-
 charge of that ministry, which “ being found
 “ in fashion, as a man he humbled himself”
 to accept ; since as the Father had sent him,
 so sent he the Apostles ; with similar appoint-
 ment to preach the Gospel, and with equal

* Philip, ch. ii. ver. 7, 8.

assurance,

assurance, in his name, to apply the promises of admission to, and continuance in, its privileges. In dependency on this enquiry, and with reference to our general theme, it is designed to investigate the permanent rights which may be understood to be derived to the successors of the Apostles, with respect to this great power, the sanction of the spiritual authority; as vindicated with the rejection of unfounded pretensions, and the establishment of just claims at the Reformation.

The absolute and uncontrollable power of erecting the standard of good and evil, and of marking out the limits of observance and transgression, is the essential and eminent prerogative of God; of him who “maketh peace” and createth evil*, who implanted the moral sense, and revealed the unerring rule, —his exclusive right it must be to enforce or to relax the sternness of his requisitions upon principles of unsearchable wisdom†; to issue out inexorable decrees, or to intimate conditional threats and promises; to impute iniquity, or to vindicate suspected righteousness; to distribute wrath in the present life, or to

* Isaiah, ch. xlv. ver. 7.

† Exod. ch. xxxiv. ver. 7. *αφεναι αμαρτηματα γαρ μοι τι θεω δυνατον.* Chrysostom. in 1 Cor. ch. xv.

withhold a proportioned reward, till the dispensation of that final judgment, in which mercy will be mingled with unimpeachable justice. That he who possesseth the power may delegate it however to his ministers, to exercise with such authority, and on such terms, as he appoints, can admit of no question.

That our blessed Redeemer was true and perfect God. That as the prophets had described the Messiah *, and as on his appearance he was declared to be †, he was “one with the Father,” we consider as an established truth. From this essential nature radiated the excellencies of that glory which existed “in the beginning,” and constituted the sufficiency of that character which alone could offer up an adequate atonement for the sins of mankind ‡. This incorruptible per-

* Isaiah, ch. ix. ver. 6.

† John, ch. x. ver. 30. and Mr. Hawtrey's Appeal to the New Testament, p. 44—50. 1 John, ch. v. ver. 21. Luke, ch. i. ver. 16, 17. compared with Malachi, ch. iii. ver. 1. Matt. ch. i. ver. 23. John, ch. xiv. ver. 10. Rom. ch. ix. ver. 5. Revel. ch. i. ver. 7, 8. ch. xvii. ver. 14, 19.

‡ Christ, as God alone, could offer a satisfactory oblation to the Divine justice; and a body was “prepared for him,” that he might have somewhat to offer. Heb. ch. x. ver. 5. This statement solves the question, which has occasioned great disputes in the Lutheran Church, concerning the expiation, whether it were made by Christ in his Divine or human character. Mosheim, cent. 16. sect. 3. p. 2.

fection

fection it was, which could not partake of the pollution and abasement of the flesh, and broke forth with frequent manifestation on earth, in the assumption of eternal attributes *, in the declarations of Almighty power †. Still however, in the reverent contemplation of Christ's character are we authorised to consider him, when that "glory" which he had before the world ‡" was veiled under human condition, as engaged in the execution of an office to be performed, in its ordinary exercise, with subjection to the Father §. He who had been in the form of God, and by whom "all things were made," professed, in the ministration of the service || which he had undertaken, to derive all power and knowledge from the Father.

Hence with a declaration of inferiority, referring, it is conceived, to his human nature

* John, ch. i. ver. 1, 3, 14. ch. viii. ver. 58. ch. xi. ver. 25, 26. ch. xvii. ver. 5. Col. ch. i. ver. 17. Heb. ch. i. ver. 3.

† John, ch. ii. ver. 19. ch. vi. ver. 40, 44. ch. x. ver. 18, 28. Col. ch. i. ver. 17.

‡ John, ch. xvii. ver. 5.

§ Irenæus represents the Divine nature to have been quiescent at the temptation, crucifixion, and death of Christ, but to have been assisant (or the human nature to have been absorbed) in his victory, his resurrection, and ascension. Cont. Hæres. l. iii. c. 21.

|| Γνωµενος υπηκουος. Philip. ch. ii. ver. 8. 2 Cor. ch. viii. ver. 9.

and office, and not to any distinction resulting from a mysterious subordination in the identity of the Godhead *, or to any merely filial dependency in the eternal or in the human generation of the Son †, he affirmed, that he “ could do nothing of himself ;” that he delivered doctrine not his own, and “ spake “ not of himself,” and “ knew not ‡.”

This

* The subordination of the Son, admitted by Pearson, Bull, Waterland, Bishop Horsley, and others, implies no inferiority in the Divine nature of Christ, but a difference of order and office. See *Defens. Fid. Nicæn. cap. xi*; Pearson on the Creed; Waterland on the Athan. Creed; and Preface to Eight Sermons on the Defence of the Divinity of Christ; Bishop Horsley's 15th Letter to Priestley; Tertull. *adver. Prax. c. ix, xii, xiii.*

† Mr. Hawtrey's suggestion, in his late learned works, has been fully investigated by the standard of Scripture and the primitive Creed. We have only to observe, that if it could be proved, that the term Son was first assumed when the Word was made flesh, it would not lessen the difficulties of these passages, in which Christ professes his subordination and subjection to the Father; and it must have been in the reality of his human nature, and not merely in title, that the inferiority of Christ obtained. The notion is mentioned by Waterland and Sherlock as an ancient and erroneous opinion; and it may be apprehended indeed that the proofs of Christ's Divine nature, which are drawn from a generation not taking place till his appearance in the flesh, will not tend to establish the eternal equality of our Lord. See the Bp. of Chester's and Mr. Hodson's late Publications.

‡ John, ch. v. ver. 19, 30. ch. vii. ver. 16. ch. viii. ver. 28. ch. xii. ver. 49, 50. ch. xiv. ver. 10. Acts, ch. i. ver. 2. Luke, ch. ii. ver. 52. Mark, ch. xiii. ver. 32. Irenæus, who cites this last verse, supposes Christ to have been ignorant of the day and hour therein referred to; in perfect consistency with that belief in the Divine nature of Christ, and his equality with God,

This was a suitable effect of the assumption of an human character for the execution of a delegated commission, in conformity to the requisitions of God's will, and for an example of obedience to mankind. It was agreeable also to the design of an appointment, which was to be defective in no formal evidence, to rest on no self-attested report *. The works, which were to bear suffrage to Christ's pretensions, were to argue a concurrent authority, and an unity of will, demonstrating that the Father had sent him, that he dwelt in him, and had not given him the Spirit by measure†.

Consistently

God, which he every where fervently maintains. Cont. Hæref. l. ii. c. 48. and note. Feuard. in cap. xlix. It may be observed, however, that when Christ says that the Son "knoweth not," it seems insufficient merely to suppose him to ascribe a precedency of knowledge to the Father, and to profess to derive it, as he did life and eternal generation, from him; since, however derived, if he possessed the knowledge, he could not, as God, say that he knew not. But in his human character he might assert that he knew not—It was not within the competency and concern of his ministry. Lightfoot observes well on the place, that we must distinguish between the excellencies and perfections which flow from the hypostatical union between the two natures, and those which flow from the donation and anointing of the Holy Spirit.

* John, ch. v. ver. 31. ch. viii. ver. 14—18. ch. x. ver. 37, 38. ch. xiv. ver. 9, 10.

† John, ch. iii. ver. 34, 35. John, ch. xi. ver. 41. It is deserving of notice, that St. John, who insists more forcibly than any of the sacred writers on the Divine nature and attributes of Christ, furnishes also the most abundant proofs of his acting, in his office of prophet and minister, by a delegated com-

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mission.

Consistently with this representation, the indications of an imparted authority were furnished on the first admission of Christ to his consecrated office, when the heavens were opened at his baptism, and the Spirit of God, of whom also he was conceived, descended in visible manifestation *, and lighted upon him ; and he was “ anointed with the Holy Ghost “ and with power †.” By the influence of this Spirit, which was to “ bear witness in “ earth ‡,” the functions of the prophetic character were fulfilled §, and the ministry of an obedient service directed ||.

In contemplating the conduct of an incar-

mission. By asserting the Godhead in the most unequivocal terms in the prior part of his Gospel, the Evangelist precluded the deduction of conclusions derogatory to Christ's dignity, from his subsequent statement. See also Matt. ch. xxviii. ver. 18.

* *Εν σωματικῷ ἰδελ*, Luke, ch. iii. ver. 22. with a bodily shape, hovering, as a dove hovers with outspread wings, and probably with a display of glorious light. See Patrick's Witness, ch. iv. p. 75. and Taylor's Ductor Dubitant. b. ii. rule 6.

† Acts, ch. x. ver. 38.

‡ 1 John, ch. v. ver. 8.

§ It had been foretold of Christ to Moses, that he should utter the words which God should “ put into his mouth,” and speak what he was commanded. Deut. ch. xviii. ver. 18, 19. It was the essential character of a prophet not to speak in his own name, or what was not commanded him. Deut. ch. xviii. ver. 20. Numb. ch. xxii. ver. 18. Jerem. ch. i. ver. 7.

|| Luke, ch. ii. ver. 27. ch. iv. ver. 1—18. Acts, ch. i. ver. 2. Matt. ch. xii. ver. 18. Waterland's 6th Sermon.

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nate God, whose actions were perhaps intended to be illustrative of his Divine attributes, as well as expressive of the nature of his commission, it would be presumptuous, by any positive discrimination of his works, to determine, which are to be considered as the exertions of an omnipotence inherent in his own person, and which are to be regarded as the testimonies and offices of the Spirit. The concurrence of design, and the conjunction of powers displayed in a glorious and consummate scheme of mercy, when the voice of the Father accompanied the descent of the Spirit, and the influence of the Spirit conspired with the administration of the Son, have produced an union of operation between those who are of equal glory; in which the respective agents are not always distinctly characterized. Therefore it is that our Lord, when appearing in his prophetic and ministerial character, performs those actions which are ascribed to the guidance of the Holy Ghost*, with the authoritative voice of an uncontrolled and supreme Power†; and with intention to advance the faith offers up an

* Matt. ch. xii. ver. 28. Rom. ch. viii. ver. 11.

† Matt. ch. viii. ver. 3. Mark, ch. i. ver. 25—27, 41. ch. v. ver. 41. John, ch. ii. ver. 19.

address

address to the Father for the restoration of him that was dead, though himself empowered at all times "to quicken whom he "would*." Hence also is the eternal Spirit spoken of by the sacred writers in respect to Christ, with a latitude which leaves us to doubt whether the Divine nature of our Lord or the Holy Ghost be intended †.

As however the publication of the Gospel, and the works which were wrought in confirmation of its claims, are usually ascribed to the especial influence of the Spirit; the power of remitting and of retaining sins may, at least, with consistency of design, be considered also as the gift of the Spirit; appointed in support of an authority destitute of earthly functions; annexed in the character of our Lord to the priesthood with which he was invested, when rendered "like unto his brethren, to make reconciliation for the sins "of the people ‡;" which he exercised in its first discharge, when the Spirit of the Lord

* John, ch. xi. ver. 42. compared with ch. v. ver. 21—26.

† Heb. ch. ix. ver. 14. where some understand by the eternal Spirit "the Holy Ghost," and some the "Divine nature of Christ." See Whitby on Matt. ch. iii. ver. 16. and Sherlock's Scripture Proofs, ch. i. Heb. ch. viii. ver. 3. 1 Peter, ch. iii. ver. 18.

‡ Heb. ch. ii. ver. 17, ch. vii. ver. 24, 25.

was

was upon him, because the Lord had “anointed him to preach good tidings unto the meek, had sent him to bind up the brokenhearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives*.”

The Gospel was founded on the promise of forgiveness and reconciliation; so, was it witnessed to be, by the prophets †, proclaimed by the Baptist, and preached by the Apostles ‡. In the ordinary exercise of his ministry, therefore, Christ proposed the forgiveness of sins to all, who accepted the terms of salvation; and when by a particular application he certified the hope of pardon to those who professed a faith in his power, he may be supposed to have exerted, not an extraordinary and partial prerogative of the Godhead, “since he came down from heaven, not to do his own will,” or to receive any that the Father did not draw, but rather a right of that judgment which “was committed to him” who “had the key of David§;” in consistency with the design of his office; though indeed that judg-

* Isaiah, ch. lxi. ver. 1.

† Acts, ch. x. ver. 43.

‡ Luke, ch. xxiv. ver. 47. John, ch. i. ver. 12. Acts, ch. ii. ver. 38. ch. xiii. ver. 38. ch. v. ver. 31, 32. Rom. ch. iii. ver. 25. Col. ch. ii. ver. 14.

§ John, ch. vi. ver. 38, 44. ch. v. ver. 22. Rev. ch. iii. v. 7.

ment,

ment, in its full and final administration, could be exercised by him alone who was perfect God.

That the remission of sins, annexed to a faithful acceptance of the Gospel, and the pardon held out by our Lord on particular occasions, extended to the eternal event, there is full authority to conclude. In the instance of the paralytic, whose faith, doubtless, as well as that of the persons who brought him, Jesus had seen, the forgiveness of sins conveyed in the Divine assurance, cannot justly be restricted to any imaginary cause of that disorder, under which the sick man laboured; nor is there any sufficient reason to suppose our Saviour's declaration to import less than a pardon for all the sins of which he, who was the object of his mercy had been guilty; as well as to eternal as to present consequences*; a promise, that, if the faith which then existed should continue, his sins should be remitted in conclusive judgment, and the man have a claim to the privileges of everlasting life. That the Jews so understood the assur-

* Whitby considers the palsy as an effect of, or judgment for, the sins of the man, and that our Lord speaks of the remission only of the temporal punishment inflicted for sins, and obtained by the faith, not of the palsied man, but of those who brought him.

ance,

ance, is clear, since they imputed blasphemy to our Lord * ; and it should be observed, as a presumption that Christ acted in virtue of a derived commission, that he rejects the imputation, not by the assertion of that undisputed prerogative which as God he might have exercised, but by arguing, that it was not more difficult to forgive sins than to perform a miracle ; and as a proof that the Son of Man had “ power on earth † ” to forgive sins, he commanded the paralytic to arise, and demonstrate his restoration to health and vigour.

Those who restrict the forgiveness of sins mentioned in this relation, cannot at least deny, that upon other occasions our Lord extended complete forgiveness, as well to the woman who anointed his feet with ointment ‡, as to the malefactor, whose repentance and faith he discerned, when at his cru-

* Mark, ch. ii. ver. 1—12. Their reasoning, that God only could forgive sins, that is, by his own authority, was just also ; but it will not prove that the remission of sins might not be annexed, as a sanction to the spiritual authority to be exercised by man.

† Matt. ch. ii. ver. 10. ch. ix. ver. 6. May we not understand Christ here to signify, that even “ on earth,” in his human character and office, he had that power ? That he had in heaven, as God, was indisputable.

‡ Luke, ch. vii. ver. 47.

cifixion

cifixion he promised that on that day the sufferer should be with him in Paradise.

Whether we suppose Christ to have exerted this power in his own uncontrolled prerogative as “the Prince of Peace,” or in virtue of his imparted commission, we can have no sufficient reason, it is presumed, to doubt that the authority consigned by him to his Apostles, when “he breathed on them, and said, “Receive ye the Holy Ghost,” was plenary; and as extensive as to its effects, as that which he himself had exercised; an authority not only to publish the terms of evangelical salvation, but to apply, by a judicial discrimination *, its infallible decrees to the individual.

The delegation, thus given in final appointment to the Apostles, has been supposed to be a confirmation only of that promise which had been previously made in other terms to St. Peter †, and afterwards to the rest of the Apostles; when our Lord had affirmed to them, that “whatsoever they should “bind on earth should be bound in heaven, “and whatsoever they should loose on earth,

* 1 Cor. ch. v. ver. 12.

† Matt. ch. xvi. ver. 19. Hammond on the place, and Marshall’s Penitential Discipline of the Primitive Church, p. 12, 13.

“ should

“ should be loosed in heaven *.” The words of our Saviour on each occasion, separately or jointly considered, seem to imply no less than an absolute and authoritative power of remitting and of retaining sins, as to their pardon or punishment in a future life; and those, who, by the keys of the kingdom of heaven, have understood merely the keys of the Christian Church, and by the power of loosing and binding; of remitting and retaining; a power only of absolving from, or of fettering by, ecclesiastical censures, must at least admit, that the binding on heaven † imports a Divine ratification of the earthly sentence.

This authority, however unrestrained, could not be abused by those who acted uniformly under the direction of the Holy Spirit, “ who “ guided them into all truth, and shewed “ them things to come ‡;” who “ searched all “ things, yea the deep things of God §.” “ As “ my Father hath sent me,” said our Lord,

* Matt. ch. xviii. ver. 18. Origen. in Matt. tom. xii. § 10, 11.

† Heaven is put in distinction from earth. The Apostles could bind on earth, only as they were rulers of a church on earth.

‡ John, ch. xvi. ver. 13.

§ 1 Cor. ch. ii. ver. 10.

whom

whom we know to have had power to forgive sins, "even so send I you," without any limitation of authority, or qualification, as to the nature of the sins *, and with a promise, that if they had faith, they should "do works" "as great or greater, than those which they" "had seen him perform †," and that "when" "the Son of man should sit upon the throne" "of his glory, they also should sit upon" "twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes" "of Israel ‡."

The Apostles, as ministers of a Lord who "came into the world to save sinners," exercised their power "in the spirit of meekness §;" and with regard to the correction of those whom they addressed, they inflicted, it is true, fearful and impressive punishments

* Wheatly conceives that our Lord empowered the Apostles to remit sins even in relation to God, inasmuch that those sins which they should declare forgiven by virtue of this commission, should be actually forgiven of God himself, so as to be imputed no more; but still wishes to restrict the power to a forgiveness of the sins of those on whom some temporal calamity or disease had been inflicted as a punishment for sins. The terms of the commission, however, by no means restrain the forgiveness to those whose excessive sins are supposed to have drawn down temporal judgments; and it should be remembered, that our Saviour on one occasion declared that the blindness of a man, whom he restored to sight, was not the punishment of any sin.

† John, ch. xiv. ver. 12.

‡ Matt. ch. xix. ver. 28.

§ 1 Cor. ch. iv. ver. 21.

on

on those who dared to "tempt the Spirit of the Lord," or to withstand their miraculous embassy and design; and in the case of Ananias and Sapphira have been by some imagined to have exerted their power of retaining sins to its fullest extent; since the decree, which in its execution precluded repentance, and demonstrated the Divine concurrence, might be apprehended to indicate a final and decisive ratification; as also it is contended, that on other occasions they imprecated eternal destruction on those who loved not the Lord Jesus *. Their sentence however, in general, though infallibly sure of accomplishment, as founded on unerring observation, was irreversible, only as the condition of the person remained unaltered; and they or their immediate delegates, solemnly authorised, in the power of the Spirit, delivered to Satan † those whose flagitious crimes,

or

* 1 Cor. ch. xvi. ver 22. Maran-atha is a Syriac expression for "the Lord cometh," and has been supposed to import final destruction. See Whitby. See also Galat. ch. iv. ver. 12. 2 Tim. ch. iv. ver. 14. John, ch. v. ver. 16.

† 1 Cor. ch. v. ver. 5. 1 Tim. ch. i. ver. 20. The delivering to Satan, might be the giving up of the body to the power of evil spirits, who, at the time of the preaching of the Gospel, often possessed the persons of men. Those who were baptized, and who remained in the communion of the

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Church,

or apostate rejection of the faith, forfeited the protection of the Church, with design ultimately to defeat the powers of darkness ; for the “ destruction ” only “ of the flesh, that “ the spirit might be saved in the day of the “ Lord Jesus *, ” that those whom they condemned might “ learn not to blaspheme ; ” and they intermingled with their threats exhortation to repentance, that “ the things “ which they had spoken might not come “ upon those whom they beheld bounden in “ the bonds of iniquity.”

That the Apostles employed their authority in releasing sinners from a guilt to be remembered no more, may perhaps be argued from the direction given by St. James, that “ if any should be sick, he should call for the “ elders of the Church, who might pray “ over him ; and that the prayer of faith “ should save the sick ; and if he had com-

Church, were probably screened by its protection ; and hence a considerable reputation to the Church miraculously sanctioned, when destitute of civil supports. The Apostles, and their immediate descendants, appear to have possessed the power of lengthening or contracting the chain, by which Satan and his ministers were controlled. Theod. Some think that the expression imports only a rejection from Christ's kingdom into that of the adversary. See Critical Hist. of the Apost. Creed, p. 141.

* Acts, ch. viii. ver. 22.

“ mitted

“ mitted sins, they should be forgiven
 “ him *.”

While the full extent of the commission entrusted to the Apostles is asserted, it is obvious to remark, that such unrestrained power could be consigned only to those whom the guidance of the Holy Ghost preserved from error. It could not be continued to any, who, with penetration merely human, and with passions instigated by uncontrolled corruption, might be biassed to undue partiality, or inflamed to disproportioned wrath. The peremptory and unqualified claim of remitting and of retaining sins, must necessarily be considered as the peculiar privilege of the inspired ministers of the Gospel; as restricted, together with the gift and miraculous powers of utterance and operation, to those who acted under the direction of the Holy Ghost; though an authoritative right of conditional absolution and condemnation, as to eternal consequences, may be regarded as the permanent support of the

* James, ch. v. ver. 14, 15. The Apostle speaks in an authoritative tone, *αφεθῆνται*. It may be observed, that St. James does not consider the disorder as the effect of sin, but states a case, in which is implied a doubt, whether the sick person should be guilty or not of any especial sins.

spiritual authority, transmitted with the general title of the ministry.

At what period the immediate and miraculous influence of the Spirit was withdrawn from the Church, has not been decided with sufficient evidence to determine controversy*. It does not however appear, that the primitive and uncorrupted successors of the Apostles, though, with the general rights of the ministry, they claimed the appropriate authority of applying God's threats and promises, as to their effects in a future life†; and insisted on the doctrine of the remission of sins by the true Church, as an article of Faith‡, to be believed by those who were

* The power of performing miracles, which may be considered as an appendage of the power of the Spirit, is generally supposed to have ceased in the third, or at farthest in the fourth century. Gibbon assigns, as the third cause for the rapid advancement of Christianity, the miraculous powers of the Church; yet invalidates his argument by impeaching their authority.

† *Ἐπειδὴν ὁ Χριστὸς ἐν τῇ γῇ καθύσταί ὁ Διοσκοτὸς ἐπιταί τῷ δούλῳ*, says St. Chrysostom. See also Com. in Math. tom. xii. §. 14. Tertullian considers the Church censure as a Divine censure; as a prejudgment of the future sentence. Tertull. Apol. c. xxxix. In the third century it was decreed, in the Eastern and Western Churches, that absolution should be given to those at the point of death, with reference to eternal reward, *ἵνα μελλοῦσι ἀπαλλάσσονται*. Euseb. Eccles. Hist. l. vi. c. xlv. Epist. prim. Cleri Romani ad Cyprian. et ad Cler. Carthag.

‡ Apostles Creed. Cyprian. Epist. 69—70. Edit. Fell. Hieron. con. Lucifer—Per hanc enim stat Ecclesia quæ in terris est. August. Enchirid. c. lxiv.

baptized,

baptized, yet pretended to any infallibility in judging of the internal character of those, whom they addressed. Their sentence was uttered in full conviction of its accomplishment, on a supposition of the reality of the circumstances, on which they pronounced* ; generally in connected consideration with the decree of admission to, or exclusion from Church communion ; but occasionally with assurance of conditional forgiveness ; and sometimes with an unalterable sentence, as to eternal consequences, and to those who had incurred no censure of ecclesiastical discipline.

Briefly then to recapitulate what, with a diffidence becoming on such a subject, we would be understood to maintain ; the power of remitting and of retaining sins is considered as the necessary and permanent function of the spiritual authority ; exercised by Christ and by his Apostles, with preternatural knowledge and peremptory application, and to

* The sentence of exclusion was grounded on the presumption of abscession from Christ's eternal kingdom. Dr. Stebbing makes therefore a very erroneous assertion, when he affirms, that in the primitive Church public absolution was nothing more than a release from Church censures, and a restoration of the offender to the privilege of visible communion : a statement the more noticeable, as inserted in a book adopted by the society for promoting Christian knowledge. See an account of the prayers and sacrament of the Lord's Supper, p. 55.

be inherited by their successors, in the government of the Church, as among the general rights of the ministry; but with no assumption of intuitive penetration; with implied conditions, though authoritative declaration.

It was not till the principles of the primitive faith were changed, that the presumptuous boast of infallibility was consistently claimed by those, who affected the unqualified and unconditional power of remitting and retaining sins, and dared to prophane that pretended power, with the interested design of profiting by the credulity of mankind *. The proclaimed successors of St. Peter, after departing from the integrity of his faith, arrogated with offensive presumption a peculiar title to the possession of those keys, which they falsely maintained to have been bequeathed with exclusive prerogative to that Apostle †; and to confer a jurisdiction

* Even in the time of St. Jerom, the arbitrary power of absolving sins was assumed. This father speaks of some, who thought that they could condemn the innocent and absolve the guilty, 1 Com. in Matt. l. iii. He in one place represents the power as declaratory, but in another considers the priests as in some measure judging before the final day. See Epist. ad Heliod.

† Cyprian de Lapsis, Epist. 33. & de Unitat. where he represents the Church, for the sake of unity, to originate from one, but all the Apostles to have equal power.

definitive

definitive as to the interests of the present and of future life, competent to regulate the decrees of temporal and eternal judgment*.

The claim thus extended was rendered the foundation for the support of that authority, which was usurped over the minds and persons of men. Hence, when the increasing offences of the Church shrunk from the scandal of public penance, and were to be uttered only in the whispers of private confession†, the sentence of the priest became gradually to be considered as essential to salvation, and sufficient in itself, without regard to that full and complete repentance, which should qualify for absolution. Temporal expiations were accepted for spiritual offences, on the stipulated price of redemption, as well from future punishment, as from ecclesiastical censure. Sin was emboldened by the fancied facility of its remis-

* R. Simon Biblioth. Com. iii. c. xxxiii.

† Auricular confession indeed had been established in the third century, in the Greek Church, and in the fifth century in the Western Church, by Leo the Great. By insensible departure from the spirit of the institution, it was required as necessary to salvation; with minutest enumeration of particulars, and without cautious provision for repentance. Origen Hom. 2. in Psalm xxxvii. Leo Epist. 69, and 78. August. de Symbol. de Catech. l. i. c. vi. Concil. Lateran. It has been long a peremptory and mischievous form in the Romish Church.

sion, and even encouraged by secret connivance, for the advantage which resulted from the sacrifice of its profits: the visions of purgatory, the efficacy of solitary masses, the intercessions and transferable merit of saints were proclaimed; the measures of indulgence were meted out, and the sale of imaginary treasures of superfluous righteousness was carried on with scandalous and avowed traffic.

Such as rejected the proffered terms of salvation, injurious as they were to the doctrine of Christ's atonement, were persecuted with vindictive severity; were exposed to denunciations of eternal wrath, and forfeiture of temporal possessions. Individuals were severed from the connections of society, and often deprived of freedom and of life. Monarchs were dethroned*, their subjects excited to rebellion, and interdicted kingdoms were ravaged by bigotted and confederate invaders†. The terrors of Pagan excommunication

* Innocent III. excommunicated Philip King of France, Alphonso of Leon, Raymond of Toulouse, and John of England.

† The petty princes of Europe were compelled by the Papal power to persecute heretics wherever they could be discovered, and the religious orders were established to fight against them.

Raymond

tion were revived *, and the confidence and peace of society destroyed, by treachery and violence.

When the rights of the Church were investigated at the Reformation in this country, the same moderation and regard to just claims were preserved in this important point as in others; and while the genuine privileges of the different orders † of the ministry were revered,

Raymond Count of Toulouse was obliged to enter into a crusade against the Albigenses, his own subjects. Hist. des Troubadours. The emperor Frederic not only condemned those to be burnt, who were convicted by the ecclesiastical judge, but directed, that, if any temporal lord, after admonition, should neglect to extirpate heretics from his territories, within a year, it should be permitted to catholics to seize the lands, and exterminate the heretical possessors. Lyndewode de Hereticis Cod. 1, 5, 4. as cited by Blackstone. The Emperor was himself expelled from the throne of Sicily by his own constitution — neque enim lex æquior.

* Mosheim observes, that in the eighth century excommunications in Europe acquired new accessions of terror. He represents the barbarous converts to Christianity, to have founded the excommunication in use among the Christians, with that which had been practised in the times of Paganism. Cent. viii. p. ii. ch. ii. §. 6. note P. Cæsar de Bell. Gall. l. vi. c. xiii. Tacitus Orat. 49. See also Joseph. de Bell. Jud. l. ii. c. vii. for account of the terrible excommunication established by the Essenes.

† Neal affirms, that in Edward's ordinal, " the form of ordaining a bishop and priest is the same," and that " the Reformers in his reign believed but two orders in Holy Scripture." See Hist. of Puritans, ch. ii. Neither of which positions is true. Collyer has pointed out some differences in the terms. See vol. i. p. ii. b. iv. The three orders are separately enumerated in

renced, their fictitious pretensions were rejected. Every just power, which could be derived in virtue of a transmitted authority, was asserted on the ground of a legitimate and uninterrupted succession from the Apostles: whatever of exclusive right, whatever of permanent jurisdiction, could be justly challenged by the priesthood, as composed of "Ambassadors of Christ, rightly called to "their office, and ordained by the laying on "of hands," and duly appointed "stewards of "the mysteries of God," however affected or infringed by transient declarations *, was finally respected and ratified †. Such power indeed,

in the form, and in the act confirming it, as they had been in the necessary Erudition of a Christian Man. See Hammond on the Power of the Keys. Taylor's Life of Christ, p. iii. §. 16. Wells's Paraphrase on 1 Cor. v.

* As by those of Henry, Edward, Elizabeth, &c. See preceding Discourse.

† In a declaration of the functions and divine institution of bishops and priests, signed by Cromwell and Cranmer, the spiritual power of the ministry to preach and teach the word of God, to administer the sacraments, and to confer the Holy Ghost, to consecrate the blessed body of Christ, to loose and absolve from sins true penitents, to bind and excommunicate such as be guilty in manifest crimes and sins, to order and consecrate others in the same office, is fully asserted. See Burnet, vol. i. Addenda, fol. 321.

Even Cranmer's commission reluctantly admitted some rights, "divinitus commissâ;" and Gardiner in his work, *de vera Obedientia*, maintains that the sword of the Church extends to teaching and excommunication. The Erudition of a Christian

indeed, and such jurisdiction, it was perceived, could only be of a spiritual nature; importing a right to offer and to withhold the sacraments; to admit and to reject from the fellowship of Christ's kingdom; to superintend its discipline and administration, and to impart to others that authority, which they had been empowered by their commission to exercise.

The exclusive right of the Clergy to denounce the spiritual threats, and to unfold the spiritual promises of the Gospel, to judge of offences, and to apply the sentence of exclusion from, or admission to, Christ's kingdom was not invaded: understood however it was, that this right implied * no undefined power of setting up new principles of rejection or

tian Man allowed that the functions of the Clergy consisted in preaching and administering the sacraments, in the power of binding and loosing, that is, in giving absolution, and admitting the penitent to church-communion, and in excommunicating those who refuse to be reclaimed. The spiritual act of institution is preserved as a preliminary to induction.

* The 25th of Henry VIII. confirmed the 5th of Rich. II. and 2 Henry V. c. 7. by which the bishops were allowed to be judges of heresy, though it repealed 2 Henry IV. c. 15. which left too much to the judgment of the bishops, not requiring legal proceedings. All these statutes were repealed by 1 Ed. VI. c. 12, and after their revival under Mary, were abrogated a second time by 1 Eliz. c. 1. which established the High Commission Court. The civil sanctions annexed to these statutes authorized the interference of the Legislature.

favour,

favour, or of departing from that criterion of obedience, and those laws of fellowship, which Christ and his Apostles had established.

This chief and essential right of spiritual authority, which is derived from the transmitted claims of the ministry, and which constitutes the basis of the inherent jurisdiction of the sacred order, was accurately defined and duly guarded in the declarations and offices of the established Church. Claiming no infallibility of judgment*, though professing a sacred and disinterested call, the lawful ministers of the Church pretended not to that plenitude of power, which had been delegated, doubtless with personal restriction, to those who had received a miraculous inspiration of the Holy Ghost, for their immediate direction; qualifying them with unerring sentence to pronounce on the remission or retention of sin, as to the

* The words of our Lord, "Receive ye the Holy Ghost," adopted into our Ordination Service, may be justified, not only as supplicatory, but as in some degree authoritative on the part of those who have a due appointment to convey the ministerial powers in their ordinary extent, and may presume on the divine ratification of a form consecrated in agreement with the sacred institution. See Burnet, p. ii. p. 145. The words, "Do you trust you have the Holy Ghost," do not imply the necessity of a miraculous impulse, but such pious resolution and views, as may be suited to the faithful discharge of the ministerial office.

decision

decision of an eternal judgment ; to affix or to dissolve the unquestionable seal of condemnation *. Asserting only the ministerial and exclusive right of applying God's promises and threats, they aspired to exercise the office of admitting to, and of expelling from, the communion of Christ's earthly kingdom, respectively, those who revered or disobeyed his laws, and as they rightly administered such service, to release from, or to expose to the divine wrath, those, whom they addressed †.

So

* These pretensions were sometimes asserted in the most unqualified terms. In a work called *Cranmer's Catechism*, and supposed to be written or translated by him from a Latin version of a German book, it is affirmed, that when the true Church by its ministers doth promise remission of our sins, and here on earth doth absolve us, we may surely trust, that in heaven also, and before God, we are absolved and pardoned. It is farther stated in the work, that God hath given the keys of the kingdom of heaven and authority of forgiving sins to his ministers. See Collyer Hist. vol. ii. p. ii. b. iv. fol. 251. It should have been added, that the absolution is valid, only as we are entitled to it, of which the Church has no infallible power to decide. See also a too loose account in the Institution of the Christian man, " which words being spoken by the priest on earth, " he ought to believe that they shall be ratified in heaven, and " that he is already freely pardoned for the merit of Christ's " passion." See the Bishop of Chester's Edit. of Nowell's *Catechism*, p. 7.

† Jewell's Apolog. All must admit that the sentence of exclusion from Christ's Church, when duly administered, is ratified by eternal sanctions. But some writers seem to dispute the power of the Church to apply by its ministers forgiveness to the individual. Thus Wheatly conceives that the
word,

So far the rulers of a spiritual kingdom still may pronounce with reluctance that sentence, which, while it excludes from the communion of Christ's faith on earth, those, who obstinately reject his laws, closes on their guilty view, the gates of eternal salvation; or by "the ministry of reconciliation," cheerfully proclaims to the unfeignedly dejected and contrite mind, those terms of forgiveness, which are the pledges of God's everlasting pardon.

That our Church claims no more, even where it has been censured as assuming a too lofty tone, may be proved on examination of the strongest form of absolution which it employs*; in which is asserted only the
power

words of St. John, ch. xx. ver. 23. confer only a power of excommunicating and absolving; and that no authority can be urged from hence, for the applying of God's pardon to the conscience of a sinner, or for absolving him any otherwise than from the censures of the Church. And yet afterwards he allows that the favour or displeasure of God is not wholly unconcerned in those acts of the Church, and argues from Matth. ch. xviii. ver. 18. that whatever sentence shall be duly passed, shall be ratified by him whom they represent. It is to be lamented that the inconsistencies on the subject of absolution, in a book so deservedly in general use, should not have been rectified in the later editions. See sect. v.

* See the absolution in the Service for the Visitation of the Sick. Wheatly favours the opinion, that the Church here intends only to remit its own censures. But the reason assigned for thus restricting the absolution seems to be insufficient, since the
desire

power of the Church, to absolve sinners who
 “truly repent and believe in Christ *,” and

desire of pardon, which in the Collect that follows the sinner is represented to entertain, is the desire which he had before expressed as a preliminary to absolution, and which he might still entertain, without distrust of the priest's authority, in the hope of God's ratification of the sentence pronounced. The person prayed for is not supposed to be under any censure; and it is perhaps more reasonable to imagine, that the Church designs, in this ancient form, to convey to the afflicted penitent the assurance of God's pardon, on the supposition of the existence of repentance and faith; by a formal act which Christ has promised to ratify; consistently with which the prayer of the priest may be offered up for the revival of a decayed nature, and for the preservation of the sick member in the unity of the church. The priest does not, as has been urged, pretend to any intuitive knowledge of the human heart, but decides on the presumption of the sincerity of the repentance which is professed. Bishop Bancroft assured King James at the Hampton-Court conference, that the Confessions of Augsburg, Bohemia, and Saxony, retained this form; and that Calvin approved such a general confession and absolution as was used in the Church of England. The King called it an apostolical ordinance.

* It deserves to be noticed, that in the American Liturgy this form is omitted in the service of the Visitation of the Sick, and no direction is given for particular confession or absolution. In the form for the Visitation of Prisoners, is a direction to the minister to exhort the criminal to a particular confession of the sins for which he is condemned: after which, the minister is to declare to him the pardoning mercy of God, in the form which is used in the Communion Service, which is the same as that in our Communion Service, and which is in supplicating form. Notwithstanding therefore the compilers of this Liturgy profess that their Church is far from intending to depart from the Church of England, in any essential point of discipline or worship; they seem to have designed to relinquish particular confession of sins, and the authoritative power of absolution in the priesthood—its essential and important claim, and without which the sacerdotal commission is destitute of sanctions.

the

the priest, in virtue of such authority, acts only on the supposition of the existence of repentance, in the person who humbly and heartily desires absolution, and for whom the prayer of faith has been made ; nor does it appear that our Church designs, in any of her service, to lower her authority in this respect, whatever difference of expression or mode of assurance may be employed ; but that it uniformly exerts an appropriate power in virtue of its exclusive privilege *, to be exercised by its ministers, upon such grounds of decision as the human judgment can form, and to be confirmed by divine ratification, only so far as it is administered in consistency with circumstances estimated by fallible observation.

* Some have considered the absolution, or remission of sins, in the daily service, to be only a declaratory form. See Bennet. But it is presumed, that here, as well as in the service of the Visitation of the Sick, the Church designs to exercise an appropriate and appointed power, of *pronouncing* and conveying pardon, on the express condition of repentance and faith. As it is an especial and authoritative act of the fully appointed and authorized ministers of the Church, it seems not to have been designed, that a deacon should pronounce it. Our ordination gives to the deacon authority, only to read the Gospel, and to preach ; but seems to consider an especial guidance of the Holy Ghost, as still necessary for the discreet use of the power of absolution, saying to the priest, " Receive the Holy Ghost : whose sins thou dost forgive, they are forgiven ; and whose sins thou dost retain, they are retained."

A pecu-

A peculiar right then, annexed to the sacred office, essential to the preservation of a government destitute of temporal sanctions, and necessary for the restoration of those, who after baptism decline, is asserted to be exercised not with the peremptory and judicial decision of an infallible discernment, but still with an authoritative application, on conditions presumed or expressed. A power derived from the Apostles, and different from that which every Disciple of Christ may assume; to be administered with relinquishment only of their intuitive confidence, sufficient to convey terror or consolation to the mind, when conscious of the justice of the declaration, as then unquestionably valid, and sure of Divine ratification; but imposing no indispensable obligation on the individual to consider his salvation as dependent on the sentence, by sealing it with a sacramental importance, or by representing it as of more than discretionary utility*.

This

* Our Church, in the Exhortation before the Communion, directs, "that if any person cannot quiet his own conscience by self-examination and public confession of sins, he should apply to some discreet minister, that he may receive the benefit of absolution," &c. So in the Visitation of the Sick, the priest is directed to move the sick person to make special confession of his sins; and when he feels his conscience troubled with any

M

weighty

This right, challenged by the ministers of a true Church, is claimed in virtue of their

weighty matter, the priest is to absolve him, if he humbly and heartily desire it. In the first book of Edward was a clause, since expunged, in which it is said, that "such as should be satisfied with a general confession, should not be offended with them that do use to their farther satisfying the auricular secret confession to the priest: and that those who thought it needful, to the quieting of their own consciences, particularly to open their sins to the priest, should not be offended with those that are satisfied with their humble confession, and the general confession of the Church; but in all things follow and keep the rule of charity." Our Church did not mean to discountenance private confession and absolution, but the mockery and indulgence of auricular confession and remission. It preferred public forms, not upon any different ground of their respecting merely a releasement from Church censures, upon which principle they would be nugatory when no sentence has been uttered, and no scandal given, but as they are more general and are not liable to abuse. On suitable occasions, the private absolution is approved upon the same principles of regard to a final remission of sins; and there is no foundation for Dr. Stebbing's fancy, that private absolution was continued merely in compliance with popish prejudice. If the order be now useless for private absolution, when required before the communion, there are some, it is presumed, still living, who remember its utility; and private absolution to the sick is now in daily use, to the serious consolation of many in moments of severest trial. See Dr. Stebbing's Brief Account of Prayer and the Lord's Supper, p. 56. Private absolution may be very salutary, though not indispensibly necessary to salvation; and it is never allowed in our Church, but on the express condition of unfeigned repentance. It should be observed, that Dr. Stebbing admits, in conclusion, that a power to declare forgiveness upon the terms of the Gospel is challenged by our Church, and wrapt up in the ministerial office. It is well known that Dr. Reynolds, who in many respects disapproved of the regulations of our Church, received absolution on his death-bed with imposition of hands from Dr. Holland. See Combes on the Absolution in his Companion to the Temple.

appointment

appointment to their high office by those lawful rulers who have derived a transmitted jurisdiction in regular succession from the Apostles. "The honour no man taketh unto himself, but he that is called of God *"—by such means as he has established. A mission ratified by them who have "authority in the congregation" to send, must be essential†, as we collect from precedent‡; and the ministerial privileges during successive centuries were supposed to flow only by conveyance of episcopal ordination||. They cannot consistently

* Heb. ch. v. ver. 4. This appears to be an universal rule applied to Christ, and applicable to the ministry, respecting succession. See Rogers's Review, p. 154—159.

† Rom. ch. x. ver. 15. Rogers's, p. 159, 160. 23 Article.

‡ Barnabas and Paul, though personally called by the Holy Ghost, were separated for the work of the ministry by the ministers of the Church, by fasting and prayer, and imposition of hands See Acts xiii.

|| The advocates for Presbyterian ordination would do well to consider wherefore Titus was left at Crete to ordain, and Timothy sent to Ephesus, if the laying on of the hands of the presbytery were sufficient. Timothy derived the gift of the Holy Ghost only from St. Paul, however the presbytery might concur in the imposition of hands. Comp. 1 Tim. ch. iv. ver. 14, and 2 Tim. ch. i. ver. 6; as the council of Carthage conferred this privilege of the presbytery, Concil. Car. 4. Car. reserving the benediction to the bishop therein. Hieron. Ep. 85, ad Evagr. Potestas ergo peccatorum remittendorum Apostolis data est, et ecclesiis quas illi a Christo missi constituerunt, et episcopis qui eis ordinatione vicaria successerunt. Hostes autem unius catholicæ ecclesiæ in qua nos sumus, et adversarii nostri qui Apostolis successimus, sacerdotia sibi illicita contra nos vendi-

M 2

cantes,

consistently be understood to be derived from appointment to the sacred office by those who have not themselves received the authority which they pretend to delegate; and whatever extraordinary measures of divine indulgence may be conceded to unavoidable departure from apostolical institution, the confidence of wanton deviation must, to say the least, be presumptuous and full of danger; and tends to sanction the vain pretensions of every precarious shepherd who climbeth into the fold, and whose voice the sheep can with no well-grounded security obey; who invadeth an office which he hath no assurance that Christ will ratify, or rather which it is evident that Christ must condemn as in disregard of his appointment.

This eminent prerogative of the spiritual

cantes, et altaria profana ponentes, quid aliud sunt quam Chore, Dathan et Abiron &c. Cyprian, Ep. 75. The validity of presbyterian ordination has been sometimes contended for in cases of necessity; and irregular ministers were frequently allowed to officiate in the scarcity of pastors in Elizabeth's reign. Bishop Bancroft insisted that the Scotch presbyters, who had not received episcopal ordination, might be consecrated in the reign of James. It has however been justly condemned in all cases not unavoidable, as an unauthorised deviation from the practice of the Church for fifteen centuries; and the consecration of the Scotch bishops was chiefly justifiable upon the idea that the whole episcopal character might be conveyed at one ordination.

power,

power, the right of applying God's threats and promises, may be considered as inalienable from the ministry; which, under no circumstances of connection with the State, can be surrendered or relinquished. A privilege it is, derived from a Divine commission; which, as it affects no temporal interest, and beareth no sword but that of the Spirit, is to be exercised independently of all temporal power. Separate from, or connected with the State, it must preserve its independent vigour; incapable of suffering from external changes, and retaining its unperishable force, as doth the soul its native energies, in conjunction with or divorced from the body. The confirmation which it receives from the State, it receives as a tribute of voluntary co-operation; designed to strengthen the present impression of its sentence, and not to supersede its authority*. The decrees of expulsion from visible com-

* The ministers of the Church may certainly exercise their power of spiritual jurisdiction against every person, even against the supreme magistrate, who may merit exclusion from communion; as they excommunicated Andronicus, Governor of Ptolemais, and closed the gates of the Church against the Emperors Philip and Theodosius, till public testimony of repentance had been given. See Synes. Epist. 58, ad Epif. p. 198. Euseb. Eccles. Hist. lib. iii. cap. 33. They transgressed their power only by attempting to annex to the sentence temporal sanctions, and penalties not authorised by the community.

munion, which as a consequence of this authority are uttered by the ministry, are to be regulated by the magistrate only as civil effects are annexed by him to its declarations. The legislative powers of discipline, and the mingled rights of jurisdiction, which in consistency with, and dependency on such authority are exerted, must be restricted in due subserviency to temporal government, without the sanction of which, assemblies ought not to be gathered together*, or civil penalties to be inflicted.

While the original rights of the sacred order, and even those acquired privileges which were not unfriendly to the interests of the community, were duly revered in agreement with the principles of the Reformation, the claim of the ministry to direct in the exposition of the terms of communion, was not overlooked. That the doctrines of faith and the forms of public worship which they commended, should be canvassed by the legislature; and be accepted only as they were judged to be consistent with the instructions of Revelation, was but an effect of the sober exercise of that conscience which Christ has

* 1 Maccab. ch. xiv. ver. 44.

left

left unfettered and free, and the legitimate expression of that concurrence which had been deemed necessary in the primitive Church.

That the right of excluding from the communion of the national worship, those who violated the fundamental laws of its constitution, should be exerted only upon known principles and expressed limitations, was but a charitable provision. The sentence was to be uttered by its appointed * and accustomed judges † ; but to prevent such vague and arbitrary

* John, ch. xx. ver. 21—23. Titus, ch. iii. ver. 10. The right of the bishops of the primitive Church to grant or withhold communion was so clear, that no Christian was admitted to communion, in a foreign congregation, without credential letters from his own bishop, which were called *Literæ commendatoriæ*, *communicatoriæ* or *dimissoriæ*. These letters were styled also *Literæ formatæ*, and were written with peculiar forms and marks, to prevent surreptitious recommendations. See Bingham, book ii. ch. 4.

† Statute 5 and 6 of Edward VI. It is provided in 29 C. 2. c. 9, which abolished the writ *De Hæretico comburendo*, that nothing in the said act shall extend to take away or abridge the jurisdiction of Protestant archbishops or bishops, or any other judges of ecclesiastical courts, in cases of atheism, blasphemy, heresy, or schism, &c. but that they may punish the same according to his Majesty's ecclesiastical laws, by excommunication, deprivation, and other censures not extending to death. Upon the abrogation of ancient statutes against heretics, the cognizance of heresy and punishment of heretics returned into its ancient channel and bounds ; and now belongs to the archbishop as metropolitan of the province, and to every bishop within his own proper diocese, who are to punish only by ecclesiastical

M 4

censures.

bitrary constructions as fatal remembrance had registered in the records of persecution *, it was justly determined that the speculative line of heresy should be in some degree defined by the standard of the Scriptures, and the positive decisions of the primitive councils †. The zeal of religious conviction was prudently tempered by deliberate regulation; and

censures. And so, saith Lord Coke, it was put in ure in all Queen Elizabeth's reign; and so it was resolved by the chief justice, chief baron, and two other of the judges, upon consultation in the 9 Jac. in the case of Legate, Gibson, 353. No person can be indicted or impeached for heresy before any temporal judge, or other that hath temporal jurisdiction. Burn, Eccles. Law, article Heresy.

* Under the term of heresy the Romish Church persecuted every deviation from its own arbitrary decrees. See Lyndewode, cap. de Hæret. Fox's Martyrs, &c. The Canon Law, with dreadful latitude, reckoned upon 88 sorts of heresy. Ayl. Par. In England, by 2 Hen. IV. c. 15, passed at a time when persecution obtained its chief powers, the diocesan might by his own authority convict heretics, and the sheriff was bound ex officio to commit them to the flames if required, unless the convict abjured.

† B. 9. 1 Eliz. c. 1. Heresy was limited to what had been adjudged to be so by the authority of the canonical Scriptures, or some of the four first general councils; or some other general councils wherein the same was declared to be heresy, by the express and plain words of the said canonical Scriptures, or such as should be judged to be heresy by the High Court of Parliament, with the assent of the clergy in convocation. It has been thought that still too much latitude was allowed in the construction of heresy by this act; which, as it created the High Commission Court, was repealed: though its rules are considered as good directions in the ecclesiastical courts. The four first general councils defined heresy with great accuracy.

decrees

decrees were no longer to be delivered out at the suggestion of party interest or private malice, to loosen the ties or dissolve the connections of social life. Reasonable it was that the Church should issue its excommunications, as in the purest ages*, with concurrence of the whole congregation, whose observance could alone give present validity to the sentence †; and in consideration of the political sanctions annexed to its decrees ‡, submit the regulation and extent of its effects to the direction of the civil power §.

Where the civil power has itself assumed the right of excommunication, it has not

* Matt. ch. xviii. ver. 16, 17. 1 Cor. ch. v. ver. 2—13. 2 Cor. ch. iv. ver. 10. 2 Thessal. ch. iii. ver. 6—14. Gal. ch. v. ver. 12. Clem. Rom. Epist.

† Thus the archbishop and clergy in the reign of Henry I. who excommunicated the breakers of the Great Charter, professed to do it in the presence, and by the assent of the King, the Earl of Cromwell his brother, the Earls of Norfolk and Suffolk, Marshal of England, and other peers.

‡ An excommunicated person is disabled from serving in any court, and an excommunication may be pleaded in abatement of his action.

§ 25 Hen. VIII. c. 14. 32 Hen. VIII. c. 26. 34 Hen. VIII. c. 1. 35 Hen. VIII. c. 1, 2. Excommunication, to have a civil effect, must be pronounced by the bishop, and signified by him to chancery, whence the writ *De excommunicato capi-endo* is issued to the sheriff, to imprison the party without bail or mainprize, till he hath made satisfaction to the Church. If a *non inventus* is retained, a *capias* is to be awarded, with a proclamation for appearance within six days, on pain of pecuniary fines with increasing weight.

been

been on the presumption of any spiritual authority * ; but either by an excess of the temporal jurisdiction, or in virtue of that conceded supremacy; which the sovereign may be empowered to exercise with the concurrence of the Church, of which the judicial sentence has been at the same time required †.

By the principles of the reformation, therefore, no spiritual rights of the Clergy were infringed; the hallowed laws of the divine founders of the Church were regarded with reverential awe; the civil power lent its

* Bishop Jewel thus describes the limits of Elizabeth's claim. " She preacheth not, she ministereth not the sacrament, " she doth neither excommunicate, nor absolve from excommunication, she sitteth not to give sentence in spiritual courts, " she challengeth not the dispensation of the keys of the kingdom of heaven, her majesty is supreme governor over her " subjects. The Bishops within her realm are subjects to her." View of a seditious Bull, p. xiv. Can. 39.

† By 31st of Edward I. when no infringement of the spiritual power was apprehended, it was directed, that the archbishops and bishops should pronounce the sentence of excommunication against those who by word, deed, or council, should do any thing contrary to the charters of the liberties of England, or of the forests, or in any point break or undo them. In some statutes of Edward VI. the right of excommunication was assumed by the civil power, 5 and 6 Edw. ch. iv. The spiritual power may by its independent authority excommunicate for spiritual offences, but the civil sanctions to its sentence must be derived from the state; and upon this principle the general interference of the legislature is justified. Burn represents a general act of pardon to have the power of releasing from the penalties of excommunication, meaning doubtless from the civil penalties. See also Articuli Cleri, 9. Edw. II. Art. 7.

aid,

aid to support their effect and influence ; provided for their promulgation, and continued to countenance the claims of those appointed to communicate them. With the ministers it rests, “ to speak, and to exhort, and to rebuke with all authority,” to vindicate themselves from contemptuous disregard * ; as to aspire to no arbitrary controul, so not to shrink from those well founded rights, which they derive from their commission ; nor from that lawful power, with which the state hath judged it expedient to give present effect to their just decisions.

That all jealousy of an undue assumption of temporal power in the Clergy is now removed, or must rest on ancient prejudice or suspicious resentment, the friends of true religion may rejoice : still however may the sober and disinterested zeal of fidelity to Christ's service be allowed to regret, that a reluctance to have recourse to compulsive measures, should have acquiesced in the neglect, even of those temperate exertions of legitimate authority, which the discipline of the Church, and the welfare of the community, commend.

* Titus, ch. ii. ver. 15.

Whatever

Whatever concessions may have been timidly made in accommodation to a relaxed system, the theory is false and dangerous, which sanctions the neglect of salutary laws.

In the regulation of the spiritual departments, no uniform and impartial maintenance of regimen will be censured or disregarded. In the general administration of the ecclesiastical jurisdiction, the civil power is not unwilling to second the discreet exertions of a lawful authority *. Unwise were the council, that would stimulate to any rigorous infliction of human laws, those who, by gentleness and forbearance, should encourage the growth of the religious principle: but the warmest asserters of intellectual freedom have admitted the propriety of restraining public offences. Those who have had no wish to revive the salutary discipline of the Church,

* Blackstone assures us, that the notion is groundless, which some entertain, that the courts of Westminster Hall are at open variance with those of Doctors Commons. It is true, he observes, that they are sometimes obliged to use a parental authority, in correcting the excesses of those inferior courts, and in keeping them within their legal bounds: but on the other hand, they afford them a parental assistance, in repressing the insolence of contumacious delinquents, and in rescuing their jurisdiction from that contempt, which, for want of sufficient compulsive power, would be otherwise sure to attend it. Comm. vol. iii. ch. 7.

have

have contended, that its ecclesiastical censures might be issued with a less timid, and less feeble voice; and that the interrogatories of its official enquiry, should not be repeated with mere formal and ineffectual injunction. Considerations of expediency and season, and a regard to the prevailing temper of society, must doubtless be allowed to operate: but it must not be forgotten, that the fear of present punishment, and the shame of present disgrace, when discreetly worked upon, may contribute to reformation of manners. Powers delegated in trust for the correction of prevailing immoralities, when exercised with conscientious and dispassionate regard to the welfare of society, must be honourable; and cannot indeed be relinquished without a desertion of duty, which the extent of evil and the despair of remedy will not justify.

Those, however, who in lenient compliance with prevailing abuses, retreat from exertions of authority, which might be deemed invidious by persons whom no moderation can reconcile to coercive restraints, in concerns of religious obligation, should at least, as knowing the "terror of the Lord," with more anxious sollicitude, persuade men on those motives of eternal consideration, which
they

they are especially appointed to proclaim; they should exhort and convince gainfayers, not neglecting such rebuke, even sharp rebuke, as established character and ascendant influence may render impressive, especially towards those "unruly and vain talkers and "deceivers," who subvert established principles*; and not admitting to the communion, those, whose notorious and open depravity is the cause of public scandal.

Those also among the laity, who are loudest to condemn every temporal sanction, designed to repress the insolent, and to discountenance the flagitious, should at least be ready to testify their reverence for that spiritual authority, which our Lord unquestionably designed for the permanent support and administration of his kingdom; should be careful, that they weaken not real claims, by complaints against fictitious pretensions; nor labour to invalidate the influence of a circumscribed authority, by imputing to it the scandal of ancient excesses†. Those who

* Tit. ch. i. 9—13.

† Few, it is hoped, will reason so fast as Hume, who asserts somewhat incautiously as a philosophical historian, that "the cruelty and treachery, which attended the punishment of John Huss and Jerome of Prague, prove the melancholy truth, that toleration is none of the virtues of priests, in any form of ecclesiastical government," ch. xix. A. 1422.

would

would disparage the sacred profession, must go back to former ages, for intolerance of zeal or extravagance of power; and the malevolent attempt, but betrays a prejudice, which will not discriminate, and a design, which aims at a darker purpose. In the person of his ministers, they impeach an authority derived from Christ; disregarding the precepts of the Son, who "being made perfect, became the author of eternal salvation to all that obey him *."

* Heb. ch. iv. v. 9.

SERMON

S E R M O N V.

MATT. xxviii. 20.

*Lo! I am with you always, even unto the end
of the world.*

TO the Disciples, whom he was about to leave, and to whom he had revealed the prospect of sufferings and of sorrow, our Saviour judged it expedient also to disclose the gleams of consolation. With design to soothe them, in their affliction, for the loss which they were about to sustain in his departure, he promised to send to them "another Comforter *," who should abide with them for ever: and in order to encourage them in the difficulties and persecution which they were to endure in the publication of his faith, he furnished the assurance of a perma-

* John, ch. xiv. ver. 16, 17, 23. ch. xv. ver. 26.

nent countenance and protection, to be experienced in the omnipresence of his Divine nature*.

That the foundation of the Church which Christ had established should remain solid and immoveable amidst every change; that “the gates of hell should not prevail against it;” and that its duration should survive the passing away of the material world, was declared on other occasions, in a strain of similar encouragement. Such intimations must have inspired with cheerful sentiments those, who might have been otherwise depressed with the reflection, that without human assistance they were to be opposed by every earthly power, and who in the confidence alone of Divine armour could be expected to stand against the “wiles of the devil †,” and “to wrestle,” not merely “against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places ‡.”

* The omnipresence of Christ may be collected from Col. ch. i. ver. 17. and Heb. ch. i. ver. 6. as well as from the text; and is admitted by Irenæus, Clemens Alexandrinus, and other Fathers. See Bull, Def. Fid. Nicæn. § 14. c. iii.

† Matt. ch. xvi. ver. 18. ch. xxiv. ver. 31. Luke, ch. xxi. ver. 33.

‡ Eph. ch. vi. ver. 11, 12.

That

That the Apostles and earlier Disciples of Christ derived considerable support and animation from contemplating the extent of these promises, as well as from benefiting by their effects, it is reasonable to suppose. The heavenly favour which was to shine upon them, was not that of any precise description, or uniform influence. A general guidance, a superintendent care, was all that the Divine assurances had implied ; and accordingly they soon understood that there were “ diversities “ of gifts, though the same spirit ;” and collected from the earliest events of their ministry, that the personal protection, which they were to experience, in the afflictions that they had been taught to expect, was to be indefinite and variable : that though in Christ’s name they should “ cast out devils, “ and speak with new tongues, should take up “ serpents, and if they drank any deadly thing, “ it should not hurt them * ;” yet that in persecution they should “ flee from city to city ;” and that he who might escape through every vicissitude of danger, the violence of that “ city which stoned her prophets,” “ the “ perils of the wilderness,” the perils of a

* Mark, ch. xvi. ver. 17, 18, and Acts, ch. xxviii. ver. 3.

thrice-suffered shipwreck, and the venomous hold of the viper, might be permitted, as he had declared himself ready, to be martyred for the name of the Lord Jesus *; that what they should speak, though suggested by the Spirit, would often serve but as a testimony against those who rejected its address †, and persecuted its servants unto death.

Beholding without jealousy the “ differences of administration” which they perceived to be subservient to the designs of their Lord, and regardless of personal affliction in their zeal for the promotion of the Gospel, they doubted not of the final accomplishment of God’s promises; and demonstrated, in the constancy which they displayed, the vigour and influence of the Spirit which supported them.

That the general superintendence which gave efficacy to their labours, and rendered even their sufferings conducive to the establishment and confirmation of the faith, should continue to secure a succession of the ministry, and to assist its exertions, they had

* Acts, ch. xxi. ver. 13.

† Matt. ch. x. ver. 17, 18, 30.

ample

ample cause of confidence to believe; since Christ had directed them to “go and teach all nations,” promising at the same time a protecting care, which should continue, not alone, during the preaching of the Apostles, not alone, as hath been idly asserted, till the end of the Jewish age, but through every successive generation; till all nations should be baptized into the universal kingdom, which should subsist in the dispensations of eternity.

Of the continuance of this protecting care no reasonable doubt can be entertained. Of the specific import and latitude of the promise, different opinions have been formed, not seldom erroneous, and in proportion prejudicial in their influence.

A cursory view of the errors which have been engendered by a too sanguine and unrestrained interpretation of our Saviour's words, as connected with assurances of a similar description, will serve to demonstrate the importance of that just construction which was adopted at the Reformation; and which tended with considerable effect to strengthen the foundation chosen for the re-establishment of the sincere doctrines of Christianity.

A gross and carnal expectation of a personal return of our Lord, to produce the immediate restoration of a temporal sovereignty to Israel, appears at first to have existed even in the minds of the Apostles, when commanded to wait at Jerusalem for “the promise of the Father *.” It was built probably upon those splendid descriptions of Christ’s kingdom, which the ancient prophets had furnished in representation of its final triumph; and was perhaps in some degree confirmed by a misconstruction of those discourses of our Lord, that related to the period which should succeed his second advent †. The Apostles however, though their intrusive curiosity was discouraged by Christ, were soon enlightened by the Holy Ghost, to discover that these visions of future glory were to be referred to a distant æra, when the blindness “which had happened to Israel should be done away,” and “the fulness of the Gentiles be come in ‡.” That
 “the

* Acts, ch. i. ver. 6, where some suppose that *αποκαθίστασις* should be rendered, *appoint* or *establish*.

† Matt. ch. vi. ver. 10. ch. xxvi. ver. 29. Luke, ch. xxi. ver. 31.

‡ Rom. ch. xi. ver. 24, 25. Pf. ii. ver. 8. Isaiah, ch. xxxv. lx. lxv. Jer. ch. iii. ver. 13—17. Ezek. ch. xxxvi. ver.

“ the Prince of Life” was “ received by the
 “ Heavens till the time of the restitution of
 “ all things*,” and that the perfect righteousness, which was to be “ the manifestation of
 “ the sons of God†,” glorified by his personal presence, was to be looked for under “ new
 “ heavens and a new earth ‡.”

Leaving to the scoffers and sensual followers of their own lusts to enquire after the promise of Christ’s coming, with premature and incredulous derision, they understood that for the advancement of his kingdom, holiness and godly conversation should be promoted §; and looked only to those immediate effects of Christ’s influence; which were amply experienced in the rapid diffusion of the Gospel at its first rise, when “ its doctrine shone forth as the morning, and sent
 “ forth her light afar off ||.”

The expectation of a personal presence of Christ to preside over and direct the estab-

ver. 24. 36. ch. xxxvii. Zech. ch. viii. ver. 7, 8. Rev. ch. xix. ver. 7, 8. ch. xxi. ver. 2, 9, 10; which allude to effects of Christ’s kingdom, not fully to be experienced till its universal and perfect establishment.

* Acts, ch. iii. ver. 21. See also Matt. ch. xxvi. ver. 11.

† Rom. ch. viii. ver. 19, 21.

‡ 2 Peter, ch. iii. ver. 13.

§ 2 Peter, ch. iii. ver. 14. || Eccles. ch. xxiv. ver. 32.

lishment of his kingdom, appears to have been slowly relinquished, as the evangelical dispensation disclosed its character ; though it retained an influence over those whose heated imaginations anticipated with eager impatience, the second advent of our Lord ; and a too extensive interpretation of the Divine promises continued to excite mistaken notions of the nature and effect of our Lord's superintendence over his Church.

Among those who understood the promises to import only a spiritual presence, some imagined that the result of such superintendence, however invisibly presiding over the Church, must necessarily imply the preservation of the integrity of all its departments ; to be displayed on earth with unvaried representation, steadfast in the sincerity of its professed faith, and perfect in the purity of its exterior institution and service. Hence, after the fatal schisms which took place in the contests of the early ages ; when the liberal spirit of Christianity contracted its views to a confined circle ; each separate assembly, arrogating to itself the exclusive claim of an uncorrupt system of faith and discipline, began to entertain sentiments of hostility to those, with whom it had broken communion ; and
to

to consider the most trivial differences of opinion as constituting insuperable barriers of distinction. Fenced within the narrow boundaries of local prejudice, each contemplated his respective district as the " garden " enclosed*;" the peculiar province of Christ's presence. Partial traditions revered as revealed truths, and national customs insensibly blended with the rites of primitive observance, were maintained as doctrines essential to salvation. The intemperate zeal of bigotry was kindled; and the blind fury of persecution began to rage, which, while it fought for the name, violated every principle of religion.

The notion of a promised continuance of an unchanged portraiture of the true Church, to preserve, under the guidance of Christ, personally presiding in his vicar, through all ages, its original form and unfaded glory, its transmitted doctrine unclouded, its pure institutions and ceremonies undebased, was the false ground on which the Roman presumption rested the claim of its pretended infallibility; professing to confine itself to the rock which Christ had established, while it piled on the

* Canticles, ch. iv. ver. 12.

foundation

foundation of St. Peter's confession the perishable materials of human vanity *. Hence the antichristian boast of an earthly supremacy, which, though its reputed oracles varied with every interest, persisted in the frontless assertion of undeviating truth †; and though the only unerring law of faith was rejected, maintained as Catholic and uniform a Creed, discoloured with diversities which could be concealed alone in ages of darkness.

Those who reject the Roman hierarchy, as a vitiated and apostate ministry, to be excluded from the contemplation of the Christian Church, and yet behold in the latitude of Christ's promises the preservation of the perpetuated image of his kingdom, with ostensible characters and indefectible faith; have sometimes referred with desultory and changing appeal to the scattered congregations at different times set up with professed reformation from the corruptions of a depraved

* 1 Cor. ch. iii. ver. 12.

† The doctrine is still maintained by some in full vigour. "This primacy of the Pope," says Mr. Charles Plowden, "imports the power of government by laws; and the promise of Christ warrants that these laws shall not deviate from the path of eternal truth, or lead the faithful into error." See *Considerations on the Fallibility of the Holy See*, p. 78, as quoted in a *Letter to the (Roman) Catholic Clergy*, by Sir John Throckmorton.

Church :

Church *: but however cheerfully a tribute of commendation may be paid to those who withdrew from a sanctuary profaned with vanities, and appear in distant scenery the advocates of truth and precursors of reform, it were fond admiration not to descry the errors which secession did not leave, and which continued often to triumph in the delusions and heresies of the secluded sects. It were blind and partial reverence to forget the broken succession of the ministry; and the frequent interruptions, in the shifted representation, and transferred government of the Church.

Waving the minute description of these different opinions, and leaving the refutation

* As the Massilians or Euchites in the East; (see Cave's Hist. Literar. Vol. II. p. 199.) the Waldenses in the West, who at a very early period cherished the expiring flame of religion, and cultivated a reformed faith in the valleys of Piedmont and Navarre, and in the twelfth century were assembled in great numbers under Peter Waldus, at Lyons: the Berengarians, who appeared in France in the eleventh century; the Catharists in Italy; the Albigenses, who were originally colonies of Paulicians from Bulgaria in Thrace; the Wickliffites in England, and the followers of Arnold of Brescia, of John Huss, and Jerome of Prague; which sects are to be commended in many respects for withdrawing from existing corruptions, and for the doctrines and manners which they displayed, but most of whom retained errors of faith and practice, which furnished subject of malignant exultation to the Church which persecuted them. Leger's Hist. Gener. des Eglises Vaudoises. Turretin. Hist. & Lardner's Credib. Baronius, A. D. 1148. No. 38.

of

of what may be deemed erroneous in them, to the evidence which will naturally result from the establishment of truth, it may be expedient to confine our Lord's promises within their due limits of interpretation, as unconnected with the revelations of the final glory of the Church; and to illustrate their completion, without regard to the exaggerations of misconception, or the boastings of prejudice.

That the Church of God, coeval in its origin with the creation of man *, hath existed through all ages in a distinct character, illumined by those beams of Divine revelation which it reflects; and that it shall continue to flourish with various degrees of waning and renovated splendor, till the great city, "descending out of Heaven," and "having the glory of God †," shall appear, no one who reviews the sacred records, and contemplates the unrolled scroll of prophecy, can dispute ‡: but that the assurance of the prophets, or of our Lord, extended to the preservation

* The Church is represented by Nowell to have existed before the creation of the heavens and earth; as indeed it did in the religious harmony of the celestial servants of God. Nowell. Catech. p. 95. Heb. ch. xii. ver. 22, 23.

† Rével. ch. xxi. ver. 10, 12.

‡ See Pearson, Thorndyke, &c.

of

of any visible image of that Church, to persevere under one form of polity in the unchanged profession of the faith *, must be denied on a just construction of the promises, and on an impartial retrospect of the history of past ages. Sufficient is it, for the vindication of the Divine truth, that in all times Christ has continued to protect the structure of the Church; to secure the distinct administrations and sacramental institutions which he appointed; and so far to irradiate the interior of his Temple by the residence of his glory, as to preserve in the Scriptures the permanency of that "light which lighteth every man that cometh into the world," and that "to as many as have received him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God; even to them that believe in his name †."

If we look back to the opening of the Divine scheme, we find that the first promise

* It is well known to be an article of the Romish faith, even among those who reject the Papal infallibility, that Christ promised that his Church should never fail to teach the faith which he delivered; and that the doctrine which the Romish Church ever has taught, and now teaches, is the same doctrine which was revealed to the Apostles. See R. Plowden's Letter to a Roman Catholic, p. 42.

† John, ch. i. ver. 9, 12.

which

which assured a restoration, intimated a previous defeat *. The earliest covenant was established with threats, and the radiant bow, which was set in the clouds of dispersing wrath, was given with consideration, that “the imagination of man’s heart was evil from his youth †.” The deliverance from Egypt, and the preservation in the wilderness, were displayed amidst frequent murmurings of the whole congregation. The golden calf was worshipped in Horeb, while the tables of testimony were written by the finger of God on Sinai; and through every period the “kingdom of priests” contained the children of transgression ‡.

So also the Christian Church, though it was consecrated with “new and living ways of entrance,” and was to be approached with “a true heart in full assurance of faith,” exhibited, even under the immediate presence of its High Priest, no circle of perfect and unmingled characters. In the sacred band of the Apostles were to be found,

* Gen. ch. iii. ver. 15. Heb. ch. xi. ver. 7. Gen. ch. ix. ver. 5, 11.

† Gen. ch. viii. ver. 21. ch. ix. ver. 14, 15.

‡ The Hebrew nation was holy in respect of the separation of the people to God’s service; not for their sanctity. See Pearson on the Creed, Communion of Saints.

even

even among those who “ were numbered
 “ with them, and had obtained part of their
 “ ministry,” one who denied, and another
 who betrayed his Master. After Christ’s de-
 parture, among the rulers, whose general ser-
 vice was faithful, there was blameable con-
 duct *, and difference of opinion. Among
 “ the multitude, who believed with one soul,”
 were those “ whose heart Satan had filled†.”
 The Churches addressed by the Apostles erred,
 and had need of repentance ‡. The net,
 which was to “ be cast into the sea,” was in-
 tended indeed to “ gather of every kind ;”
 and in the field, which the kingdom of Hea-
 ven resembled, “ the wheat and the tares
 “ were to grow up together unto the har-
 “ vest.” It was ever in the conviction of
 Christ and of his Apostles, that many who
 took up the cross should, in a state of trial
 and warfare, “ fall away ;” that “ offences
 “ must come,” and heresies arise, by which
 the evidences of truth should be called up,

* Galat. ch. ii. ver. 11.

† Acts, ch. iv. ver. 32. ch. v. ver. 3.

‡ Revel. ch. ii and iii. Many of the first Christians in-
 clined to Judaical rules. Gal. ch. v. ver. 2. Some of the
 Church of Corinth denied the resurrection, and profaned the
 Eucharist.

and

and they that should be approved would be made manifest.

Accordingly, the impartial voice of history proclaims, that as the converts multiplied, the profession of the faith was corrupted; the character of the ministry debased; the discipline of manners subverted; and in succeeding times we look in vain for the external representation of a true Church, any farther than as it was to be found in the succession of a legitimate, though depraved ministry; in the preservation of the lively oracles of truth; and in the profession of the genuine faith, mingled with, and obscured by the fictitious doctrines of human invention.

All therefore that the gracious assurances of our Lord, with respect to the protection and guidance of his Church, can be stated, in its ample extent to have promised, must be, that in the body, of which he was the mystical head, should continue to exist, through all ages, the union of a common fellowship, the unperishable permanency of the Divine Word, and the essential appointments and ordinances of a real Church.

This Church, in its visible character, was to continue to exhibit the chequered shades of

of an earthly representation, and to realize the description of its unblemished purity, only in the perfection of its final glory *. No sanction then, was given by the sacred promises to the pretences of an infallible and unchanging profession of the faith, nor to the arrogant conceit of those who, rejecting the ostensible institutions, consider the Church as composed only of members invisibly united, and predestinated by partial election to the spiritual kingdom.

As the confined limits of a local establishment were thrown down, this Church was no longer to be restricted to any favoured and peculiar people†, or to be organized in accommodation to any politic form of temporal government. Separate congregations, existing in distinct character, or combined in voluntary conjunction, were to compose connected parts of an universal dispensation; not constrained in subjection to any partial ascendancy, but each regulated by its own laws, in dependency on general principles, and in

* This idea of the Church was received at the commencement of the Reformation, as agreeable to its state in this life, *ubi habet malos bonis simul admixtos*. See a definition of the Church, corrected by Henry VIII. in Burnet's Addenda.

† Coloss. ch. iii. ver. 11.

the coherence of mutual attachment ; and all enlightened by rays, diverging from that “ Sun “ of Righteousness,” which can alone constitute the centre of a Church extended through heaven and earth. In the sacred writings, and not in traditionary doctrine, or in the precarious profession of a varying faith, was to be preserved “ the form of doctrine and sound words “ which was first delivered to the Saints ;” since “ all nations were to be baptized into “ that one household of God,” which was “ built upon the foundation of the Apostles “ and prophets, Jesus Christ himself being the “ chief corner-stone, in whom all the building, fitly framed together, groweth into an “ holy Temple in the Lord *.”

In the preservation of these unerring and sufficient oracles of truth, the accomplishment of a signal part of the Divine promise, as to the superintendence of the Church, may be maintained ; since it was surely no inconsiderable demonstration of an especial Providence, that an holy law ; denouncing through every page inspired censures against existing doctrines and manners, should, though withdrawn from general attention, be pre-

* Ephes. ch. ii. ver. 20, 21.

served

served with unabated fidelity, by those, whose flagrant departure from its instructions it exposed, and whose downfall it predicted; and be transmitted with integrity, and the unanimous consent of all Churches, till it roused the disposition to reform. It was no trivial evidence of Christ's care; that the records of revelation should be secure from injury, in languages little known but to those whom every line rebuked with keenest reproach; through ages of darkness favourable to base design; and in which superstition might have united every interest in confederate measures, had not ambitious dissension established the vigilance of mutual hostility*.

The Confession of Faith, contained in these writings, is the rock on which Christ has built his indefectible Church. Of its sincere professors, linked in invisible fellowship, and characterised by the observance of essential ordinances, no age, it is presumed, has been destitute; nor shall the gates of hell at any time

* It is a palpable and pregnant demonstration of the truth of Christianity, as well as of God's providential care of his Church, that the Prophecies of the Old Testament have been constantly preserved with unsuspected integrity by the Jews, who reject the Gospel; and the instructions of the New Testament secured to us by those corrupt Churches which were most interested to suppress them.

prevail against such Catholic Church * ; so as to destroy its existence by external oppression, or to undermine its foundations by internal heresy. By the infallible test and criterion of inspired wisdom are the pretensions of every earthly representation of such communion of the saints to be tried and examined † ; and, in proportion as its decrees are revered, will the genuine character and excellency of the Church be displayed, and the coming of the heavenly kingdom be advanced.

We, who believe the divine declarations and promises to intimate ‡ and assure § the perpetuated succession of a ministry with regu-

* Whitby conceives our Saviour's promise in Matt. ch. xvi. v. 18, to imply, that even death itself should not prevail against the genuine members of Christ's Church, or that they shall enjoy a happy resurrection. But our Lord is generally understood to have designed to signify, that the Church, which should be built on St. Peter's preaching, should never be destroyed on earth by external or intestine injury. A promise which imported, not an exemption from error, but a security from destruction by the ascendancy of the powers of darkness. 'Adns means Death. The gates of hell, being an Hebraical expression, mean Hell or Death.

† Concil. Carthag. Act. tom. i. p. 1189.

‡ The servants mentioned in Matthew, ch. xiii. v. 27, who proposed to gather up the tares ; and the stewards, who are described as the rulers of the Lord's household, to remain till his coming in, Matt. ch. xxiv. ver. 45, 46 ; must by analogy be considered as the ministers of Christ's Church. See Potter's Church Govern. ch. iv.

§ Matt. ch. xxviii. v. 20.

lar

lar appointment and transmitted claims, have certainly sufficient ground to maintain their completion in the unbroken continuance of the sacred orders. Still indeed we must admit, the gradual degeneracy of those orders into blind and deceitful guides; so far only directed by the influence of Christ and the Holy Spirit, as rendered subservient to preserve the fundamental doctrines of religion, mingled in external profession with the grossest errors; and to support and transmit the rights of the spiritual authority. The ostensible pillars, and the visible representatives of the Christian ministry, they doubtless were: and, as members of the sacred lineage, transferred to their followers the privileges and functions of their appointed office.

Such immortal succession in the institution of the priesthood, for "the work of the ministry," for "the edifying of the body of Christ," till we all come in the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God unto a perfect man; appears to have been a provision essential to the character, and contrived for the order and peace of the Christian Church; precluding distractions; and discountenancing self-ap-

* See Manning's England's Conversion and Reformation compared.

pointments*, pregnant with error and disorders †. The degeneracy of those who have transmitted a derived power, can furnish no sufficient objection to the validity of its communications; nor was the effect of Christ's ordinance done away by their wickedness, except as the doctrines of revelation were perverted in accommodation to corrupt manners ‡.

The preservation of the ministry, imparted in the divine promise, implied no infallible

* Χωρίς τῶν ἐκκλησιᾶ ἐκλεκτὴ οὐκ εἶναι, ἡ συνδροισμα ἀγίων, ἡ συναγωγή ὁσίων, Ignat. adv. Trall. Ecclesia non est quæ non habet sacerdotem. Hieron. cum Lucifer, c. 8.

† Bishop Hoadley, in an argument which affects the just pretensions of our Church, asserts, that there is the greatest appearance, and, humanly speaking, a certainty against the regular and uninterrupted succession of bishops; in proof of which assertion, he appeals to the opinion of those who maintain all lay baptisms, and all offices performed by persons who either have been irregularly ordained, or have forged their pretensions to ordination to be mere nullities. How the opinion of such persons affects the argument, it is not easy to discover. Lay baptisms have no direct relation to the subject; and whatever might the nullity of the offices performed by persons irregularly or surreptitiously ordained, there is no ground to maintain that there ever was a period destitute of a legitimate ministry, or even that such persons ever attained to the episcopal order; and therefore it does not appear upon what historical evidence the assertion can be supported, except it be that of the nag's head ordination. The Romanists admit the validity of our ordination to the Reformation, as derived by St. Austin from St. Gregory. See F. Courayer on the Validity of English Ordination. Burnet's Reformation Vindicated. and Lindsey's Vindication of the Church of England.

‡ 26 Article.

guidance,

guidance, any further, than as its members should attend to that written word which was left for their direction; nor could it be deemed requisite that the influence of the Spirit, however especially to be imparted to the ministry, should supersede the appointed oracles of instruction, or dispense with sincerity of intention and integrity of obedience: and when, therefore, from the seduction of unworthy motives, the pastors who transgressed, deserted "the fountain of living waters*," and obeyed the voice of that antichristian power, "whose coming was after the working of Satan, with all deceivableness of unrighteousness in them that perish †;" they forfeited

* Jerem. ch. ii. v. 8. 13.

† 2 Thessal. ch. ii. v. 9, 10. The disciples of Christ had been fully cautioned against that Man of Sin who was to appear. The Fathers, who lived before the destruction of the Roman empire, expected Antichrist to rise on the ruins of that dominion. See Tertul. Apol. c. 22. et ad Scap. c. 1. Hier. ad Algos. Chrysost. et Ambros. in 2 Thessal. c. 2. Origen in Matt. Tract 27. Many of the earlier reformers considered the Roman Pontiff as Antichrist. See Jewell's View of Seditious Bull, and on 2 Thessal. ch. ii. v. 47; and Paule's Life of Whitgift. Those who object to this application upon the notion of its being inconsistent with the idea that the Church of Rome is a true Church, do not seem to have adverted sufficiently to 2 Thess. ch. ii. ver. 4. where the Son of Perdition is described as "sitting in the Temple of God;" by which St. Chrysostom, Theodoret, and others, understand the Christian Church. See Chrysost. in Loc. tom. iii. Theod. in Epist. Div. Decret. August.

forfeited their pretensions to the divine direction, by departing from the established sources of illumination and grace.

The precise character and the specific effect of the spirit, the moments of its impulse, and the limits of its aspiration, “no man knoweth.” That it bloweth, however, by appointed courses, and through hallowed ways, and that it breathes its silent influence under the mild instruction of the inspired writings, perfected as the sacred depository of divine wisdom, for perpetual guidance of the Church, will admit of no controversy. When therefore, forsaking as it were the Shecinah of God’s presence, the infatuated rulers of the Church turned to the idols of their own creation; and with arbitrary assumption of infallibility, and presumptuous boasts of a divine impulse, assembled their prostitute and ambitious councils; and set up precarious traditions and decrees, while they violated the laws of acknowledged revelation; they but blasphemed the authority of Christ’s name, who, as his in-

guist. de Civit. Dei, l. ii. c. 19. The antichristian characters were very early displayed; and the extravagant adulation of Ennodius maintained in the sixth century, that the Roman Pontiff was constituted judge in the place of God. See Mosheim, Cent. VI. p. ii. ch. 2.

structions

structions were disregarded, left them to the wanderings of their own vanity.

To those who, amidst prevailing delusions, were solicitous to discern the vestiges of the true faith, it was consolation to reflect, that, the Sacred Writings were dispersed in languages so different, and among nations so separated and adverse to each other, that no change of doctrine could pass undetected; that the very sects and heresies which scandalized the faith, prevented the mutilation of its records; and that when the volume of its doctrines should be again unfolded to general regard, its authority must be respected; that the external form of the Church, with primitive appointments and fundamental doctrines, still remained, and that where two or three were in sincerity gathered together in Christ's name, he was in the midst of them *.

By the interpretation of the Scriptures into the languages of different nations, the propagation of the Gospel was accelerated at its first preaching through the most distant regions †. As the imparted blessing was withdrawn

* Origen, Com. in Matt. tom. xii. 1510.

† The Syriac, Egyptian, and Æthiopic versions, were made at very early periods of the Church; and contributed, as well

drawn and hidden from mankind, gross darkness overshadowed the people*, and was dispersed only when the beams of revelation again burst forth. It was by the providential restoration of the Scriptures, which took place at the revival of literature, that the corruptions of the Romish Church were first successfully exposed, and the Reformation happily commenced. Where this pillar of permanent direction led the way, though it might be "cloud and darkness" to those who were hardened against God's instructions, "it gave light" to all who followed the divine standard. To the exclusive infallibility ascribed to the Holy Writings by the advocates of truth, must be attributed the renovation of those principles which had been read in the simplicity of the primitive faith. Awakened to a perusal of the sacred pages, the "captive daughter" of the Church "shook herself from the dust, and loosed herself from the bands of her neck †." The dis-

as the Latin translation from which they were made, to facilitate the advancement of religion. Origen was particularly industrious in circulating copies.

* The Scriptures were read in the vulgar tongue in the Western Church, till the sixth or the seventh century, when the Latin language ceased to be spoken as the vulgar tongue at Rome. See Usher's Collect. by Wharton.

† Isaiah, ch. lii. v. 1, 2.

perfed

perfed and dejected members of the faith, reanimated by the fpirit of the Lord, were raifed up, as it were, by a refurrection, and re-affembled to compofe the living representation of Chrift's body *.

No where, was the reftored volume more joyfully unfolded, or more eagerly perufed, than in this country. The friends of religion anxiously promoted its acceptance. The adherents to error obftinately endeavoured to fuppress, or infidiously laboured to corrupt, its evidence †. The efforts of integrity, however, happily prevailed; and under the influence of Chrift's prefence, experienced in the animation of his oracles and words, the leaders of reform proceeded to refcue the institutions and doctrines of the Church from the deformities which had “ changed their glory “ for that which did not profit ‡.” Convinced that the Church of Rome, like preceding Churches, had erred; as in living and ceremonies, “ fo in matters of faith,” they

* Ezek. ch. xxxvii.

† See the Account of the infidious plan of Gardiner to obfcure the tranflation of the Scriptures, by retaining Latin words. Burnet, vol. i. fol. 315.

‡ Our Church retained every catholic doctrine; every doctrine which had been univerfally received; rejecting local traditions and adventitious errors.

determined

determined to listen only to the Scriptures *, as to " celestial voices," as " to the power of " God, against which neither law or custom " should be heard †."

Abiding by the sacred list of " those books " of whose authority was never any doubt" in the universal Church, and which had uniformly been considered as " the perfection of " uncorruptness," as being dictated by the word of God and his Spirit, they considered tradition as changeable and uncertain, and determined wholly to rest on the Sacred Writings in subjects of faith, as the foundation and final resort of all their persuasions. Even those venerable works which had been received as canonical in an inferior sense, by writers ‡ and councils of the early ages ; but which, as not included in the Hebrew canon, or in the undisputed catalogues acknowledged by the Church, had no claim to be regarded as inspired and infallible ; they retained but for example of life and instruction of manners §.

In the interpretation of the Scriptures, it was reasonable, that primitive construction and

* 19 Article.

† Jewell. Apol.

‡ Ignat. Ep. ad Philad. Irenæ, l. ii. c. 47.

§ Cosin's Scholast. Hist.

early

early explications should be regarded. Hence as commentators, on their genuine wisdom, the councils of the uncorrupted times were revered. Hence, as enlightened interpreters of the revealed Word, the learned men and fathers of the Church were duly esteemed; and while they were disparaged by the Romish Church, with conscious apprehension of the testimony which they furnished, our reformers considered them “as instruments of the “mercy of God, and vessels full of grace*.” “They despised them not; they revered them, and gave thanks unto God for them, “as witnesses of the truth, as worthy pillars “and ornaments in the Church of God. Yet “did they not build upon them, nor make “them the foundation and warrant of their “conscience; they did not put their trust in “them, their trust was in the name of the “Lord †.”

Those on the continent, who had “blown “the first trumpet, and set up the sign” of reformation, the restorers of our Church regarded as great and illustrious men; admired their bold and awakened spirit; their zeal for

* Taylor’s Dissuasive from Popery.

† See a Treatise on the Scriptures, composed from Jewell’s Sermons, published in 1570. Also Jewell’s Apol. and his Sermon on 1 Peter, ch. iv. ver. 11, and the Writings of the Reformers passim.

truth;

truth; respected their many eminent virtues; gloried in the animation of their common cause. They did not however enlist under their banners, or assume their titles. Every leader but Christ, with the exclusive veneration of the primitive faith *, they disclaimed; listening to those who preceded them in the glorious work, not as dictators of their creed, but as monitors and guides; assisting them to “comprehend, with all saints, what was the breadth and length and depth and height and love of Christ †.”

Adopting the just and liberal idea of a catholic union, resulting from a common dependency on one invisible Lord, the advocates for our national institution considered, with charitable affection, every congregation reformed to fundamental principles. The

* The earlier Christians anxiously avoided the distinctions of party titles. Chrysostom, Hom. xxxiii. in Act. Heretics first classed under leaders, Epiphan. Hæref. 42. Nazian. Orat. ad Episcop. Bingham's Christian Antiq. ch. i. § 6. In the liberal comprehension of their character, the disciples of Christ were styled Catholics.

† Ephes. ch. iii. ver. 18. Our reformers, while they rejected the intemperate and obtruded councils of Calvin, accepted the assistance of Bucer, Peter Martyr, and others. Du Pin, whose works are too voluminous to be accurate, however candidly he might design to be so, asserts what is much too strong, when he says, “C'est à Bucer et à Fagius qu'il faut imputer le changement de religion en Angleterre et en Ecosse.” Vide Biblioth. des Auteurs Herétiques du 16 & 17 Siecle.

Church,

Church, it was perceived, which had spread its multitudes to the uttermost parts of the earth, though distinguished in different distributions under different names, might preserve, as doth the ocean that rolleth in divers divisions, its essential nature, its connected waves. Contending only for those necessary doctrines and ordinances, upon which the Christian faith should rest, they admitted that rites and ceremonies, and particulars of human appointment, might vary, in consistency with the regulations of separate societies.

Every congregation, existing in the fellowship of religious union, must define the terms of its association, and describe the tenets of its faith. The variety of constructions admitted in partial and fanciful interpretations of Scripture, induces the necessity of positive explications; which may concentrate opinions in some specific points; which may refute false imputations; determine wavering sentiment, and secure consistency of instruction. The doctrines of our Church, which were drawn out into express exposition with design to fix that uncertainty of the faith which the rejection of the papal authority was represented to have occasioned, were such only as, after comprehensive examination, were approved.

approved. They were slowly ratified, and cautiously expressed. The ancient Creeds which were adopted, and the articles and formularies of faith which were composed, were commended to acceptance only as presumed to be faithfully expressive of revealed instruction; since nothing was deemed necessary to salvation which was not either read in Scripture, or might not be proved thereby *. They were framed with clear and explicit declaration in essential points, though with much latitude of expression in doubtful and controverted questions. Thus judiciously constructed, they have contributed most effectually to assist the enquiries, and unite the opinions, of the members of our Church in the chief principles of faith; at the same time that they draw not a line of proscription on those subjects, which for ages have been discussed without satisfactory solution or perfect agreement.

Our Church, which came out and withdrew itself from the innovations and assumptions of a corrupt dominion, had no design to establish its union, on any principle that might sanction future usurpations. It ad-

* Sixth Article.

mitted

mitted that a secession did not imply a schism, and that a removal from external communion did not necessarily import a desertion of Catholic fellowship. Its advocates contended, however, that a separation for trivial causes, or slight objections, was a presumptive departure from the faith, and a positive breach of that harmony, which is the band of union; that the individual rejection of public decisions, where no doctrines affecting the substance of the faith were concerned, argued a proud and intolerant spirit, which would presumptuously erect its own opinion as the standard of direction. They did not think that any declarations, or precise expositions, could control the human understanding, which had exerted itself with energy, and burst even the complicated chains with which it had been fettered by the tyranny of the Roman See. They hoped, however, for acquiescence with their determinations, so far as they should be found consonant to the authority now universally established.

The subscription to its articles, required from those who undertake to preach the doctrines of the Church, and are received into the bosom of its confidence and favour, im-

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plies no arbitrary imposition of its decrees ; since the adoption of the spiritual office is voluntary and unconstrained ; and the distribution of trust and advantages must be regulated with consideration of the connection between speculative principles and practical institutions. If the intended uniformity require the acceptance of precise articles in their known and ordinary sense ; it does not preclude a freedom of interpretation, where the original intention, or the precise import, is ambiguous and undefined. The assent, likewise, required from those who are admitted to profit by endowments connected with the establishment, is usually vindicated upon principles of similar consideration, though less immediate force*.

The power, which the Church claims, of appointing the rites and ceremonial of exterior observance, is the inherent right of every religious society, to provide for its own regimen, in particulars of varying and unprescribed character ; a right of subjecting the

* The requisition of assent to the Articles at matriculation and admission to degrees at the Universities of Oxford and Cambridge, seems to be designed to secure the integrity of religious principles in those whose education is to be provided for, and many of whom are to become ministers of the established Church.

fancies

fancies and extravagancies of individuals to the decorum of public regulation, that “all things may be done in order,” and without contemptuous transgression of lawful direction; its proclaimed authority in matters of faith*, is not that of controlling the independency of private judgment, or of setting up dominion over the mind by any arbitrary decrees; but a declaration of the pre-eminence of the deliberate and collective decision of duly-constituted teachers, entitled to deference, and best qualified, in doubtful questions, to settle and terminate offensive controversy †.

To vindicate the rights of such authority,

* The first clause of the 20th article, which asserts that the Church has power to decree rites and ceremonies, and authority in controversies of the faith, though stated by Heylin to have been extant in the Register of Convocation, and so referred to by Laud; and said to have been printed both in Latin and English in 1562; and according to Strype, in two copies which appeared in 1563; was omitted by the interest of the Puritans in 1571 and 1612, and its authenticity impeached; the principle was admitted by the earlier Reformers, and the clause was ratified by Parliament in 1662. See Heylin's Hist. of the Presbyterians, l. vi. p. 268; Vernon's Life of Heylin, and Neal, Vol. I. ch. iv. It is curious, that in the Assembly's Confession, ch. xxxi. art. 3. it is asserted, that it belongeth to synods ministerially to determine controversies of faith and cases of conscience. Hence were the words of Isaiah, “Look unto the rock from whence ye are hewn,” &c. well applied to the Dissenters, who objected to the clause in the 20th article.

† See Preface concerning ceremonies, in Prayer-Book.

is not to dispossess revelation of its paramount supremacy, or to deject reason from its seat. To the former, our Church ascribes the sovereignty of unerring decrees; to the latter, it appeals as authorised to judge, but under principles of reverence for the credible witnesses of truth, and under obligations to weigh, with impartial spirit, the depositions of general wisdom against the suggestions of particular fancy. It challenges to its assembled ministry the ability to expound the doctrines of revelation, with fairer pretensions to exactness, than can be alledged by those, who with ordinary application and single judgment, speculate in private interpretation with private prejudice. Presumptuous must be the individual who with confident vanity contemns the guidance of the collective sentiment; the comprehensive research of rightly appointed and regularly educated guides; who spurns the decision of a Church emancipated from prejudice, and modelled by men of unprecedented talents, in conformity to that sacred plan, which, under every impression favourable to truth, they studied. To some authority he must at last subscribe; and depend on the fidelity of those who disentangle what is difficult, and elucidate what is obscure; who

who interpret the niceties of the original languages, and deduce the particulars of remote connection and external illustration and testimony.

That authority hath every claim to regard, and may reasonably be allowed to determine in doubtful points, which, in its legitimate office and power, decided in the consistency of the common voice. The restorers of the faith, which we profess, required no blind submission as inspired teachers; but whatever of general guidance might be presumed to direct the enquiries of a devout spirit, was vindicated with strong pretensions by those, who, by careful study and proficiency in requisite attainments, were qualified for the search of truth; and whatever of especial and permanent direction was ensured by Christ's promises to the appointed leaders of his people, might be claimed with justifiable and peculiar confidence by the lawful ministers and interpreters of his instruction*, who had engaged with disinterested zeal in the restoration of true religion.

Those who have rejected all such authority

* *Clavis et Expositio Legis. Tertull. cont. Marcian. lib. iv. Chrysoſt. Hæref. 44. Hieron. in Eſaia, l. vi. c. 14.*

have fluctuated with endless hesitation and uncertainty, as the wantonness of their fancy hath varied; or have yielded themselves to the pretences of infallibility and the delusions of inspiration; have separated from communion with a true Church, but to be "carried about" with every wind of doctrine, by the sleight "of men and cunning craftiness, whereby" they lie in wait to deceive."

If the varieties of construction, received by different Churches as well as by individuals, be alledged to prove the existence of frequent error in the collective decision, and to invalidate the presumption of Divine guidance in the aggregate council; it should be remembered, that, since the restoration of the exclusive authority of the sacred writings, these varieties have prevailed chiefly in questions of ambiguous character and indistinct revelation: that the great and fundamental doctrines of Christianity have been maintained by almost every public representation of the Catholic Church; while heresies and enormous errors have risen with individuals, and deluded the vanity of subdivisions and sects. The Papal decrees, were framed with affectation of superiority to, or total disregard of, Scripture. Councils, have erred by listening
to

to the reports of tradition*; but the Churches, reformed on the basis of Scripture, have accorded in most of the fundamental points of faith; and approximated to each other, in proportion as they have disclaimed the dictates of private authority. It is the lust of solitary pride which engenders speculations injurious to the faith; which consecrates its own fancies, and erects its independent and delusive light. By the operation and influence of private vanity, opinions rise into doctrines, doctrines swell into distinctions, and distinctions increase into sects; extending and multiplying into endless circles, destructive of the peace and harmony of society. True wisdom, neither confident in its own opinions, nor contemptuous of those of others, corrects

* Erasmus *ἐκ συνοφωγία*. That the Scriptures were alone sufficient to salvation, was an heretical opinion before the Reformation. See Fox's Martyrs, art. Lambert. Mr. Eyre, in his late Letter to Mr. Churton, speaking of the Scriptures, asserts, that "to suppose that a dead letter, a dumb writing, often obscure, can be the means which God has pleased to make use of to teach mankind what they are to believe and practise, is to suppose an impossibility;" &c. &c. And this profane declamation, from apparently a sincere and pious writer, is to prove the necessity of a constant subsisting tribunal; without which undefined tribunal he represents the Scriptures; though he allows them to have proceeded from the Holy Ghost, to "be an apple of discord, a senseless system." p. 15—19.

the bias of personal prejudice; the influence of habit, of interest, and of passion; is studious, when the judgment is advanced to maturity, to reform the errors of early adoption, and to respect the decisions which have long been revered.

That entire agreement of opinion, which can result only from perfect knowledge, it were fruitless on earth to expect. Difference, in subordinate particulars, is not incompatible with soundness of doctrine and integrity of faith. The vesture of religion, it has been observed, may still exhibit its variegated colours, if, like that of Christ, having no seam, it be not rent. The Church, which is to admit all nations and people of the earth, must continue to receive its members, distinguished by the diversities of human character. Convinced, however, that when hereafter it shall be prepared with undefiled purity *, it shall be a glorious Church without blemish, it is our present concern to labour for the ad-

* Cyprian de Unitate, Bacon de Unitat. *Alia sunt in quibus inter se aliquando etiam doctissimi atque optimi regulæ Catholicæ doctores salvâ fidei compage non consonant.* August. C. Jul. 1, 2. p. 8.

† Canticle, vi. ver. 9. Rev. ch. xxi. ver. 2.

vancement

vancement of its perfection. As we conspire in sincerity of intention, so do we approach in correspondence of opinion; as we conform to the practical instructions of religion, so shall we coalesce in the acceptance of its speculative doctrines.

SERMON

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S E R M O N VI.

2 TIM. iii. 16.

*All Scripture is given by inspiration of God;
and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for
correction, for instruction in Righteousness.*

THE great and important principle of the sufficient and exclusive authority of the Scriptures, to be respected as the unerring guide in all matters of faith and religious instruction, was the leading star which conducted our Reformers to the discovery and acknowledgment of truth; as indeed the glory of revelation, which had shone around those who abode in darkness on the Continent, had roused their attention to the voice which proclaimed the Saviour who was “to guide their feet into the way of peace*.”

* See Matt. ch. ii. Luke, ch. i. ver. 79. ch. ii.

A disregard

A disregard to revealed wisdom, it was perceived, and a substitution of human for Divine authority, had been in every age the cause of error. The existing evils could never have been so successfully maintained, had not the sacred Volume been withheld from the general classes of society; and the removal of them could not be completely effected but by its restoration to general notice.

To the people who had been seduced by the abominations of idolatry, or misled by the suggestions of earthly councils, to whom "religion had become a reproach;" the prophets of ancient times had "spread out their hands," and exclaimed, "Stand ye in the ways, and see and ask for the old paths, where is the good way, and walk therein, and ye shall find rest*." To the misguided and deluded Jews, who cavilled at the testimonies of the Gospel, our Saviour commanded that they should "search the Scriptures;" for in them they thought they had eternal life, and from ignorance of which they had often erred†. To the same permanent and undeviating rule did the primitive Christians refer on every difficulty, as to

* Isaiah, ch. lxx. ver. 2, 3.

† Matt. ch. xxii. ver. 29.

indisputable

indisputable, and the only fure authority by which, “ whatever was concealed under the “ shade and cloud of error, might be opened “ to the light of truth*.” Similar were the exhortations of those who fought to bring back the presence of undefiled religion to our country. Possessing themselves at once of that firm and tenable ground, “ other foundation than which no man could lay ;” they determined on it, as on the established rock, to restore the Church, which was to exhibit, with renovated character, the integrity of the Christian faith †.

The translation of the Scriptures into the language of this country, had opened the first glimmerings of the restoration of true religion ‡ ; and though we refer the æra of the commencement

* Cyprian. Epist. 74. Chrysost. Hom. 49. in Oper. imperfect. Theophilus, &c.

† See the eloquent Treatise on the Scriptures, composed from Jewell’s Sermons, among his works.

‡ Wickliffe effected a translation of all the Scriptures. It was made from the Vulgate ; which Coverdale pronounced to be so greatly corrupt, as he thought none other translations were. See Epist. dedicated to Henry VIII. Some parts of Scripture had been before translated ; but the Anglo-Saxonic versions were become not only unintelligible as to the words and spelling, but illegible as to the letter and character, to the people, and even to many of the learned. See Caxton’s Life, and Lewis’s Dissert. prefixed to his History of Translations. In the reign of Henry VI. Reginald Peacock, Bishop of Chichester, who

commencement of the Reformation to the reign of Henry, we should not overlook the previous circumstances which had prepared the way for its advancement. The indications of approaching truth had long been hailed, and the impatience of the enlightened part of mankind brooked with indignation its delay. The doctrines and pretensions of the Papal power had often been assailed, deep as was its foundation, and confirmed as were its extended interests*.

The first versions which appeared, though very defective, excited a spirit which those, who were interested to support corruption, vainly laboured to discourage; and the opinions which they inspired so "mightily grew" and flourished," especially among those

who had been employed many years in translating the Scriptures, was convicted of heresy. It was customary to fasten bits of Scripture about the necks of the Lollards, who were condemned to the flames. An abbot, who was uncle of archbishop Wickliffe, is related to have said, that he was sure the Romish religion could not continue long, for he had read the Scriptures over and over, and could never find therein that it was founded by God. *Strype and Paule's Life of Whitgift.*

* The Papal authority was obliged to moderate its decrees, even in the thirteenth century, against Bishop Grossthead, whom Matthew Paris calls Romanorum Malleus et Contemptor; for fear of alienating the English nation. See *Collyer*, Vol. I. *Newton on the Prophecies*, Vol. III. p. 181—186.

who

who had been animated by the revival of literature, that, even during the life of the earliest translators of the sacred Volume, half the nation was represented, in the language of interested complaint, to have bowed to their influence; extending, in defiance of the odious and unchristian severity, with which they were opposed*.

The evidence of truth brightened in proportion as it was discussed; and to the conviction which it excited, rather than to the

* The Monkish writers state, with exaggerated lamentation, that half the kingdom had been led, even in the time of Wickliffe, to embrace his doctrines. The Londoners appear to have been strongly affected to them, in the reign of Richard the Second. In the time of Henry the Fifth they had spread so much, that though a thousand marks were offered for the apprehension of Lord Cobham, a distinguished assertor of Wickliffe's opinions, who had been condemned for heresy, and a perpetual exemption from taxes to any town which should secure him, he remained concealed in Wales four years. Chaucer, who satyriized the vices of the Clergy, and who is represented by Fox to have brought many to the knowledge of true religion; and Erasmus, who had lighted the way to the threshold of the Reformation, considerably advanced the cause. The conduct of the Clergy had rendered them so obnoxious in the reign of Henry the Eighth, that, in the affair of Horsey, who was accused of having assisted in the murder of Richard Hunne; Fitzjames, Bishop of London, made interest with the King that the matter might be examined in council; and if the accused should be found innocent, the Attorney-General might be instructed to allow the indictment false; alledging, that the people of London did so favour heresy, that they would condemn any Clerk, though innocent as Abel. See Holinshed's Chron. A. 1382. Fox, Burnet, &c.

unbridled

unbridled passions of a dissolute sovereign, are we to look for the first cause of the Reformation in this country.

The sentiment which had swelled with great and increasing energy, waited but the favourable occasion to display its vigour. Henry would probably have sooner burst his bonds asunder, if he had not been withheld by considerations of consistency in that cause, which he had been prompted in the pride of controversy to defend*. That at last he was urged to break the ties which enchained the spirit of Reform, by the irritation and obstacles which his passions encountered, is indeed unquestionable; and in this, and in many other instances, it would be interesting to consider, were it within the scope of our design, how remarkably those passions were rendered instrumental to the furtherance of

* Henry, before the agitation of his divorce, had seen the necessity of a reform in the Church, and instructed his Commissioners, at the Council of Lateran, to conclude every thing for the good of the Catholic Church, and for a reformation of the head, and of its members. In a bull which Wolsey had obtained from Rome, the manners and ignorance of the Clergy were strongly stigmatized; they were said to be "given over to a reprobate mind." Even Sir Thomas More had, with open and covert reflection, accused them in his Utopia of corruption of doctrine, in accommodation to the corruption of their lives.

the

the Divine purpose *; and by what inducements he, who had been the applauded champion of popery, was led to be the first who should “go up upon her walls, and destroy; but not make a full end: and should take away her battlements, which were not the Lord’s †.”

The historians, who detail the progress of the Reformation, in its gradual advancement to perfection, while they develop the various passions which engaged in the furtherance of the grand design; and the fluctuating changes which were rendered, by the control of Providence, subservient to one uniform and consistent scheme; unfold to our admiration many scenes of striking and important cha-

* Versique ad divinorum operum executionem humanis affectibus. Turret. Hist. Eccles. Sæc. 16. § 5. Wolsey, even before the King’s headstrong passions had been totally unreined, uttered a little before his death a very singular encomium upon Henry. “He is a prince,” says the degraded favourite, “of most royal carriage, and hath a princely heart; and rather than he will miss for any part of his will, he will endanger the one half of his kingdom. I do assure you, that I have often kneeled before him, sometimes three hours together, to persuade him from his will and appetite, but could not prevail.” See Fiddes’s Life of Wolsey, p. 501.

† Jerem. ch. v. ver. 10. The excesses of the Papal usurpation provoked their own reform. It is worth observation, that in England the immediate cause of the rejection of the supremacy was an application for a divorce; a concern in which the Popes had often interfered, with most capricious and unjustifiable cruelty.

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racter; which it were foreign to our purpose to review, since we seek only, by describing the principles, adopted and confirmed in the establishment of the work, to point out the chief causes of the excellency of its character.

In the present continuation of our general plan, it is intended to shew that the principal causes which must be assigned for the advancement of the Reformation; and for the fidelity with which our Church is distinguished in the expression of its doctrine and faith; are, first, that revelation was respected and adhered to in all points in which the Scriptures were found to disclose instruction; and secondly, that those Scriptures were explained, not by the private interpretation, or arbitrary construction of individuals, biassed by personal prejudice; but by collective explication; after general enquiry and deliberate discussion.

That the progress of the Reformation, in its advancement to perfection, must be attributed to the prevailing influence of truth, imposing its irresistible conviction, and inducing the necessity of change, in proportion as the Scriptures were unfolded: that religion did not always bend as the sceptre inclined, or conform to the designs of political contrivance;

contrivance; but that it asserted its own rights, and vindicated its own sanctity, by the influence of reason on the public mind, will appear from the most careless retrospect; whatever invidious representations may have been made to the contrary. Henry benefited the cause of truth chiefly by the steady countenance which he gave to the communication of the sacred light; in other respects he promoted the Reformation, only where his passions impelled him to desultory concurrence with its friends. Rejecting the supremacy of the Roman see, and spoiling the revenues of its institutions, he receded from its faith with hesitation and reluctance; and the Reformers, who had at first been gratified with some declarations of sincere doctrine*, with regret

* Henry has been injuriously represented to have relinquished no doctrines of the Romish faith, except the supremacy. See Du Pin, *Bibliothèque des Auteurs Herétiques*, p. i. ch. 4, &c. But it should be recollected, that the declaration of Convocation in 1536, which was corrected by the King, and the Institution of a Christian Man, approved by him in 1537, refuted many Popish opinions, and stated many points of faith in opposition to the Romish persuasions. Cranmer likewise obtained, in 1546, permission to have prayers, processions, and liturgies, in the vulgar tongue; and might have, perhaps, availed himself farther of Gardiner's absence, on his embassy to the Emperor, had not the vigilant favourers of superstition written over to inform the King, that if he proceeded any farther, the emperor would break off all intercourse with him; a threat

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which

gret saw him afterwards seduced under the influence of the Romish party *; and obtained every farther concession with difficulty.

The speculative opinions of Henry wavered with the fluctuations of his temper: uncontrollable by the dictates of others, they changed with his supposed interests, or in conformity to the views of those, who engaged his affections and flattered his vanity. Inflated with the idea of his own superior wisdom, he continued, however, at all times to be equally jealous of the orthodoxy of his faith; and, in the prerogative of an undefined supremacy, determined that the sentiments of his subjects should vary with his decisions. In the infancy of opinions the public mind certainly yields in accommodation to every decision, more pliantly than when time has strengthened, and controversy confirmed its bias. The impressions which it had received in the days of Henry, in many important

which had much effect with Henry, who wished to profit by the influence of the Emperor, to prevent any interference of the Council of Trent, in the affairs of England. See Burnet, &c.

* In the Necessary Erudition of the Christian Man, published 1542, without consent of Convocation, but afterwards confirmed by parliament, the seven sacraments were re-established, and some exceptionable principles, relating to transubstantiation and masses, introduced.

points,

points, may be pronounced to have been still recent and timid ; mingled with doubts, and listening with deference to authority. The leaders of reform were, in some particulars, as yet, under the influence of long-established notions; and where they were enlightened to discover truth, they were often unwilling to risk the concessions which they had obtained, by any hazardous opposition to their sovereign's opinions ; which seem to have vibrated with alternate favour, between the supporters of the corrupt, and the advocates of the reformed faith.

They exerted themselves principally in confirming his disposition to allow the Scriptures to the people, who read them with anxious attention ; and in promoting the general use and improvement of them ; while those who were interested in ancient superstitions, strove with solicitude to withhold them, and not seldom prophanelly to impeach their utility*. Hence, though the Reformers had

* Cranmer, in 1539, obtained permission for private persons to read the Scriptures in their own houses. Bibles had been set up in the churches in 1536. Bonner, to gratify Henry, placed six of the great Bibles in St. Paul's church in 1541. They were read with inconceivable avidity by crowds who assembled around them. Parents had their children instructed in read-

had the mortification to see the principles of the Romish faith renewed, and confirmed by penalties of unprecedented rigour*; and the mists of returning error overspread the concluding years of the King†; yet were they satisfied that they had effectually sowed the seeds which must ripen in more auspicious times; and could only labour to mitigate, by subsequent qualification, the operation of those

ing, purposely to carry them to St. Paul's, and hear them read the Scriptures. The exclusive authority of the inspired writings was slowly vindicated. In Matthew's Bible, printed in 1537, and in the Great Bible, which appeared in 1539, the apocryphal books are styled, under an ancient, but inaccurate title, *Hagiographa*. Gardiner ventured one day, in the presence of the King, to challenge Cranmer to shew any difference between the authority of Scripture, and that of the apostolical canons: betraying indeed such weakness in the contest with the modest and learned primate, that the King sharply told him, that Cranmer was an old and experienced captain, and not to be troubled by freshmen and novices.

* The six articles which established the doctrines of transubstantiation, communion in one kind, private masses, auricular confession, the celibacy of the priests, and vows of chastity, were justly said to be written and executed in blood; and gave a sanction to the decrees of religious persecution, which both parties had long cause to regret. They were ratified by a Parliament, which, with equal fervility, laid the civil privileges of the people at the foot of the throne, by setting up the king's proclamation; and that of the counsellors of his son, when under age, upon the same footing with an act of parliament.

† It is well known that Henry left 600*l.* per annum to St. George's chapel, Windsor, for ever, for two priests to celebrate mass at his tomb daily, and four yearly obits. The money was otherwise applied. Sanders affirms, that he had thoughts of being reconciled to Rome,

severities

feverities of which they had vainly laboured to prevent the establishment*.

If the first break and earlier beams of the Reformation in its dawn indicated “the day-spring” of revelation; the full and cheerful light which enlivened the entire fabric of the established Church, was derived from the same source. In contemplating the progress of the Reformation in the reign of Edward, we behold the lingering shades of superstition at length depart; while a youthful sovereign, like Josiah, “turning to the Lord with all his heart,” proceeded, under the guidance of the venerable Primate of the Church †, to purify the sanctuary from its remaining pollutions ‡.

We

* Cranmer strenuously opposed the bill for three days, though requested by the King to withdraw. In 1542, he procured an act for the advancement of true religion, which lowered the spirit of the former acts. See Burnet, and Fox, vol. ii. p. 10. 37. Some of the Reformers conscientiously relinquished a power that must have been employed to enforce the six articles. Near five hundred persons were imprisoned on account of them, but released by Cranmer's intercession.

† Cranmer was considerably assisted by Dr. Cox and Mr. Cheek, the king's preceptors.

‡ In the first year of the regency, in 1547, the protector Somerset, availing himself of a power given to the royal proclamation in Henry's reign; after suspending the jurisdiction of the bishops, appointed a general visitation throughout England, by visitors consisting of clergy and laity; who were appointed to correct the immoralities and irregularities of the clergy; to extirpate superstitions, and to re-establish further the discipline

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and

We see an improved ministry, arrayed in the decent vestments of primitive use *, no longer adoring the elevated representation of Christ's body ; but distributing its consecrated emblems †, and inviting all to the communion of that cup, of which all were commanded to partake ‡. We hear awakened

and worship of the primitive Church. All images which had not been abused to idolatry were to be retained ; and the people were to be taught not to condemn ceremonies still continued, but only to avoid particular superstitions. In the next year images were entirely removed. See Burnet.

* In the rubric of the first liturgy, published in 1548, the alb, the cope, and other vestments, were enjoined ; but in that of the revised liturgy, in 1552, the priest was restricted to the surplice, and the bishop to the rochet. White garments were used in the ancient church. See Chrysost. Hom. 60.

† In the year 1547, Parliament enacted that the sacrament should be given in both kinds, and that the people should receive with the priest. In the new office set forth in 1548, a communion was established ; and, in 1549, Ridley summed up the evidence against the doctrine of the corporal presence, after long disputations had taken place at Oxford, Cambridge, and in parliament. In the rubric of 1548, it was directed, that the wine should be mixed with " a little pure and clean water." This direction however was omitted in the service revised in 1551 ; when some alterations were made in passages in the consecration and delivery of the eucharist, which seemed to favour the rejected notions.

‡ It has been remarked, that our Saviour, when delivering the bread, which never has been refused, says only, Take, eat ; but, when giving the cup, he adds, Drink ye *all* of it : as if prophetically warning his disciples to avoid an error. St. Paul's directions to the Corinthians shew, that the apostle disapproved, not of the primitive custom of every one's drinking at the Lord's table, but of drinking *unworthily* and to excess. 1 Cor. ch. xi. ver. 21—28. Burnet, vol. ii. p. ii. b. 1.

multitudes

multitudes pour out the strains of thanksgiving, in a language understood by all, agreeably to sacred precept *; and taught to consider Christ's meritorious sufferings as the sole cause of justification; and to endeavour to fulfil the terms of acceptance by faith in that atonement, and by earnest industry in the works of practical righteousness.

The conviction which resulted from the slow and gradual operation of truth, while it secured the establishment of those changes, which, however irregularly accomplished †, were effected in consistency with the general wish, gratified and impressed the public mind. The Reformation therefore took a slow and deep root, and was prepared to endure those storms which it afterwards sustained.

A conformity, the effect of sincere conversion, was very generally established; though the influence of ancient prejudice, inflamed

* 1 Cor. ch. xiv. ver. 11—15.

† Somerset and his party effected many changes, without sufficient attention to the rights and concurrence of the spiritual power. He directed that bishops should be elected by letters patent, and that ecclesiastical processes should be made in the king's name, dissolved and confiscated the revenues of colleges and chauntries, hospitals, fraternities, &c. and many laymen were allowed to hold ecclesiastical benefices. See 1 Edw. VI. c. 12.

by

by the degraded priesthood; together with the remembrance of some advantages, which the people had enjoyed under the possessors of the monastic houses, who often purchased favour by hospitality and indulgence; induced some to wish for the restitution of the alienated property of the Church to ancient purposes. The superstition which swelled in the clamours of popular discontent, and which, in its bigotted and rebellious folly, demanded the restoration of the mass and of the six articles, subsided with returning order; and the principles of the Reformation flowed with the full and irresistible tide of general and well-founded persuasion *.

A faith, established on the evidence of the Scriptures, now generally disclosed, could
not

* On the accession of Edward, the zeal of the people for the Reformation outran, in some instances, the public measures; and the removal of the Romish superstitions was so generally acceptable and popular, that, when Somerset was displaced from the protectorate, Warwick, his ambitious successor, did not dare to avow his principles, in opposition to the voice of his Sovereign, and the majority of the people; but was obliged to yield to the stream, and to court favour by supporting the prevailing cause; disguising his opinion so artfully, as to deceive many, and gratifying his avarice at the same time, by removing from their seats of eminence, both in Church and State, those who adhered to the Romish sentiments; and unjustly

not be destroyed; though the untimely death of Edward threw a gloomy shade over its prosperity; and the dark and tremendous scene which succeeded, but contributed to endear the character of the Reformation to general regard. As the abjured superstition was restored, the bigotry and terrors, by which alone it could be supported, returned in its train*; but they returned only to ex-

justly seizing, and converting to private pillage, the rich volumes of superstition, and of suspected literature, from the public libraries of Oxford. Godwin de Præsul. Anglic. Wood's Hist. Antiq. Oxon. l. i. p. 271. Mary, on her accession, was compelled to stipulate, that she would preserve the Reformation; and she could not constrain her first Parliament to co-operate with her views. Neal, Vol. I. ch. iii. p. 89.

* The cruelties of Mary's reign were dreadful; though they have been, perhaps, exaggerated, Hearn and Collyer have complained of the falsehoods of Fox, whose gloomy mind, in banishment, received every report and tale conveyed to him. It has been represented as an unworthy act to promote the Reformation, that this book was set up by the royal authority in the Churches; and in some canons, published in 1571, called a perfect and consummate history. See Hearnii Præf. in Camden. Annal. p. 42. Twenty-seven persons, however, are admitted to have suffered during this short reign; sixteen Bishops were ejected, and three-fourths of the clergy are said to have been deprived of their livings; 2000 of whom were removed for their marriages. Even Bonner was satiated with blood, and required the instigation of the King and Queen to proceed. Fifty-two persons were executed in one session at Oxford; and a gallows and a gibbet was in almost every street. See Jewell's View of a Seditious Bull, p. 22. The Queen was meditating farther cruelties, when death closed the wretched scene. See a curious account of circumstances which prevented the effusion of blood in Ireland, in Mosheim.

hibit

hibit a sad contrast to the glory of that cause which with dilated lustre appeared to decline and set. They served but to illustrate, in strong and indelible features, the character of that faith which they laboured, by oppressive violence, to destroy, and the excellency of those principles which triumphed in opposition to their decrees.

In vain, by trampling on the institutions of Edward, did the infatuated and misguided Queen seek to lessen the reverence of the public, for the service which he had established. In vain, by endeavours to silence* or discountenance the advocates of reform †, did she strive to conceal the truth, that glared with fullest testimony. Those who were ‡
“ again

* All persons throughout England were forbidden to preach without a licence from Gardiner; a restriction designed to operate as an interdict. Coverdale, Bishop of Exeter, and Hooper of Gloucester, incurred the displeasure of the Council, by preaching with disregard of the prohibition.

† Peter Martyr, Bernardin Ochinus, John A-lasco, and many other foreigners, left the country.

‡ 2 Peter, ch. i. ver. 20. The Parliament indeed, which the Queen assembled, seconded her views, hesitating only when they were apprehensive of refunding the possessions of the Church. The Pope was obliged, in this respect, to assent by his Legate, though with words of insidious reserve, to the continuance of some lands in the hands of rapacity. See Harleian Miscell. Vol. II. p. 264—266. Sir Henry Spelman informs us, that the Pope would not concede a dispensation for the sale or allotment of the religious houses; and the reveren-
tial

“ again entangled and overcome, could not
 “ drag back a reluctant nation to the pollu-
 “ tions from which it had escaped * ;” and
 the unholy zeal which directed its vindictive
 fury against the unshaken confessors of the
 faith, but exalted their virtues to the glory of
 martyrdom, and conferred on them the ra-
 diance of an heavenly crown.

The conviction of the truth of those prin-
 ciples, which Mary had vainly endeavoured
 to destroy, had spread so generally and so
 deeply ; that no sooner had Elizabeth, on as-
 cending the throne, accepted the Scriptures as
 “ the word of truth †” and law of reverence,
 than the pillars of superstition, which had

tial fears of the people refused, for some years, to inhabit them. Similar impressions do not seem to have prevailed among the possessors of the alienated lands. The account, however, of the fate of many of those who shared the plunder, may, without superstition, be allowed to have been remarkable, whatever conclusions may be drawn upon the subject. See Spelman's Hist. of Sacrilege.

* The Protestants expressed their regret at the change with strong representations. “ Invenimus,” says Jewell, in a letter to Peter Martyr, “ passim votivas reliquias divorum, clavos quibus fatui Christum crucifixum fuisse somniabant, & nescio quas portiunculas sacre crucis. Magarum & veneficarum ubique immensum excreverat. Ecclesie Cathedrales nihil aliud erant quam speluncæ latronum, aut si quid nequius aut foedius dici potest ; si quid erat obstinatae nequitiae, id totum erat in presbyteris, illis præsertim qui aliquando stetissent a nostra sententia.”

† See Holinshed, and Strype's Annals, p. 30.

been

been again set up by the bigotry of the court, suddenly gave way. The interested and hireling advocates of a cause which they had maintained, chiefly with views of secular policy, deserted its defence; and again dissembled, or changed, in accommodation to existing motives; and Elizabeth was led by her wisest statesmen to contemplate the people as eager to throw off the yoke* to which they had been constrained to submit; and proceeded with judicious measures to re-establish the reformed worship of Edward's

* If the bulk of the nation had not been inclined to the Reformation, Elizabeth would not have sacrificed her own opinions, which favoured at least some of the doctrines, and preserved in her own chapel the objects and external magnificence of the Romish worship. It was necessary, indeed, to restrain the zeal of the people, by proclamations, from intemperate measures; and the prosperity of her reign, notwithstanding the attempts of Romanists and Puritans, is attributed to the general satisfaction of the people in the established religion. Of the fourteen bishops who remained on her accession, thirteen, it is true, refused again to change, and take the oath of supremacy, though most of them had sworn to the oath in the reign of Henry; and one of them (Tunstal) had written in its defence. Of the inferior clergy, only 80 rectors and vicars, 50 prebendaries, 15 heads of colleges, 12 archdeacons, and as many deans, sacrificed their interests to their principles; so little was the body of the clergy attached to, or influenced by, the religion which had been professed. The Protestants in the former reign had shewn a conscientious conviction. See Camden.

time;

time *; to resume with softened, though still indeed with too lofty claims, the supremacy which had been again surrendered to a foreign power †; and to advance the Reformation nearly to that perfection of doctrine, discipline, and worship, which it now displays.

To the influence then of sacred truth, beaming from the Scriptures, are we chiefly indebted for the rise, progress, and completion

* 1 Eliz. c. 2. Burnet, Vol. II. fol. 386. The second Liturgy of Edward was re-established, with some alterations, by the Queen's authority. The petition, to be "delivered from" the Bishop of Rome, and all his detestable enormities," was expunged from the Liturgy. The form at the delivery of the Eucharist, in Edward's first book, and that substituted for it in the second, were united; and the Rubric, which stated the kneeling not to have been intended on account of any real and essential presence of Christ, was omitted, probably with design to conciliate the Romanists. The spiritual Presence, however, was asserted in the Articles; and, at first, in some terms which the Convocation rejected as superfluous. Jewell complained of tardy measures; *ἰν πρὸς ἑραδυνότης*, morantur curram, said the zealous Reformer. See Burnet, fol. 3. p. B. 6. Collect of Records, p. 58.

† The 1st Eliz. c. 1. though it united the supremacy and visitatorial power to the Crown, and not, as did 26 Henry VIII. c. 1. to the King and his heirs; though it directed that those who were to exercise this authority should be appointed by letters patent, and restricted arbitrary constructions of heresy, still assigned jurisdiction and spiritual pre-eminence to the Queen, which required subsequent qualifications, and countenanced intolerant proceedings; as those of the High Commission Court, &c. See Stillingfleet, concerning the Illegality of the Ecclesiastical Commis-

of

of the Reformation, by gentle transitions in this country.

Not however solely to the restoration of the Scriptures to general notice, but to the just and judicious principles upon which they were explained, must be attributed the sincerity of the doctrine and worship established in the perfected character of the Church. The sacred writings, while they were revered with implicit deference, by our Reformers, upon every point on which they conveyed information, were not considered by them, as by some they were preposterously represented to be, so entirely the rule of human actions, as to supersede secular jurisdiction; or to preclude ecclesiastical direction in matters of changeable nature and contingent exigency; a notion leading to extravagant distortions of sacred instruction, and pregnant with mischief to society. The rights of the temporal authority were fully acknowledged; and a discretionary power, we have seen, of decreeing subordinate particulars, was understood to be vested in the Church; and was to be exercised with no restriction but that of conformity to the principles of revelation, and respect for the constitutions of civil government.

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The first assertors of reform*, also, while they restored the Scriptures to their exclusive authority in all points of specific communication; prudently foresaw, that the wantonness of private construction would engender diversity of sentiment, in the interpretation of revealed doctrines. Anxious to preserve the efficacy of that faith, which, in its genuine operation, conduces to union of sentiment; and to prevent “ the unstable from wresting the Scriptures to their own destruction,” they delivered very admirable precepts of caution; and after mature and comprehensive examination; after frequent discussion, and triumphant controversy, in which candour and

* Some foreign Reformers carried their veneration for the Scriptures so far, as to regard them as the exclusive rule of direction. Hooker states it to be, the head theorem of the Puritans, that the Scripture of God is such a rule of human actions, that simply whatsoever we do, and are not by it directed thereunto, the same is sin; an opinion, as Hooker and Warburton have observed, tending to promote alterations in civil government; and having indeed actually effected them in our country. From this principle also arose the vague and perverted application of Scripture examples, and the profane and disgusting abuse of the sacred language in ordinary life, which produced so much mischief in the last age; which was the characteristic of hypocrisy; which tended to damp genuine piety, and excited an unhappy spirit of levity and disregard to religion. See Hooker, Eccles. Pol. b. ii.

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strength

strength of argument were conspicuous*, composed the full confession of their faith; framed on the declaration of Scripture, as interpreted with deference to primitive exposition, and the tradition of the Church when Catholic and uniform; but with disregard of partial construction, and with rejection of unwarranted reports.

Hence, with a fidelity expressive of those revealed doctrines which influenced the practice of the purest ages, the enlightened faith of our Church contemplates, in the three persons of the eternal Trinity, the united glory of the joint authors of the creation, redemption, and sanctification of man; entitled to the praises and thanksgiving of those who are baptized into the Church in their sacred

* In the frequent disputes between the advocates for the two Churches, the Protestants displayed irrefragable argument and great moderation, while the baffled Romanists betrayed only the weakness of their cause, and the perverseness of their temper. Jewell's biographer says of the Papists, at the Westminster conference in Elizabeth's reign, that, like Verres, non quid responderent, sed quemadmodum non responderent laborabant. In the dispute before Convocation in 1553, conceded with pretended candour, the Protestants compelled the Romanists to admit, that, upon their principles, Christ had, in his last supper, held himself in his hand, and had swallowed and eaten himself. The Romanists, however, claimed the victory, and renewed the debate. Weston, the Prolocutor, concluded it, by saying, "You have the word, but we have the sword." Burnet, Collyer, &c.

name

name; to the exclusion of the worship of all dependant beings, however “highly favoured*,” however elevated in celestial dignity; and sanctified in triumphant righteousness. Looking but to one Mediator, even Christ Jesus, it restraineth all indirect supplication, injurious to the Divine intercession; and addresseth only to the everlasting God its prayers for the assistant services of those holy Angels, who by “his appointment” alone can “succour and defend us on earth†;” and who if, as “beholding the face of the “Father‡,” they may be conceived, with pious and unceasing charity to intreat for the successful warfare of the Church on earth §; can still have no title to that invocation which ascribes Divine attributes to created beings; and misleads the attention of Christ’s Disciples to forbidden worship of those who
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* Luke, ch. i. ver. 28.

† See Collect for St. Michael and All Angels.

‡ Matt. ch. xviii. ver. 10.

§ Rev. ch. v. ver. 8. Luke, ch. xv. ver. 10. and Zech. ch. i. ver. 12, 13. where perhaps the interceding Angel is to be considered as the Divine Logos; the Angel of the New Covenant. Mr. Eyre, in his Letter to Mr. Churton, attempts, from these and other texts, to justify the invocation of Saints, in the Romish Church: but however they may tend to prove that the Saints take an interest in the welfare of the Church, they will not authorise supplication to them. Moses, Samuel,

are but fellow-servants in the adoration of a jealous God; the sole object of devotion; the only source of blessing to mankind. Reverencing, however, with preceding generations, those who, by Divine approbation, or distinguished righteousness, were commended as examples to the world; it intreats for its members, that they may be empowered to follow "the blessed Saints in all virtuous" "and godly living *," and preserves the instructive memorial of their fidelity by appointed festivals.

Including in its comprehensive conception of the Divine scheme of the restoration of mankind, an extent of atonement commensurate with the effect of that disobedience by which "infirmity was made permanent †," our Church prescribes no limits to the expansion of God's mercy, while it represents the vicarial sacrifice as the only meritorious cause of salvation.

Noah, and Job, are mentioned in Jer. ch. xv. ver. 1. and Ezek. ch. xiv. ver. 14. hypothetically, not as intercessors, but as persons who, if living, would be approved in the sight of God. If the writing, which came from Elijah to Jehoram, proceeded from Elijah the Tishbite, it is more probable that it was prophetically dictated, as Kimchi has suggested, than that it was composed by Elijah, as Mr. Eyre supposes, after the prophet had quitted the world.

* Collect to All Saints Day.

† 2 Esdras, ch. iii. ver. 22. Heb. ch. ix. ver. 12—28.

Unfolding

Unfolding the character of an universal covenant, graciously held out from heaven, but conditionally to be appropriated, it maintains the general necessity of faith in the sufferings, and observance of the laws, of Christ: the former availing to justification only as it implies a reverence for a Saviour's mediation, and generates obedience; the latter acceptable, only, as displayed in co-operation with the suggestions of God's grace, and in conformity to the terms of the Gospel *. Thus is rescued the great doctrine of Divine atonement, in exclusion to the fancied efficacy of all mortal satisfaction or intercession—to the suppression, on the one hand, of that presumptuous confidence which razeth the foundations of our hope, to erect the Babel of a fictitious merit on an human basis; and, on the other, to the removal of that dangerous delusion, which, gazing on an abstracted faith, overlooks the salutary and essential doctrines of righteousness and moral virtue †.

Reading

* Homily on the Nativity.

† Article XI. and Homily on the Salvation of all Mankind. The Romanists attributed justification exclusively to good works; afterwards explaining, of works proceeding from faith, and with subtleties of first and second justification, or of faith and sanctification. The Lutherans, in vehement opposition to this, attributed justification to faith alone; and some of our

Reading, in the proclaimed predestination of God's purpose, no absolute and irrelative decree of unconditional election *, much less of irremediable reprobation, our Church considers God's foreknowledge as consistent with the freedom of human actions ; and election as importing a foreseen conformity to the Divine will †. Preaching the necessity and

early writers dilated so forcibly on faith, as to invalidate good works. Our Church however admits the general necessity of good works ; differing from the Calvinists in considering them not merely as effects, but as co-efficient conditions with faith.

* The Institution of a Christian Man rejects the curious conceit of predestination, and teaches, that we should " always be " afraid of the weakness and in-bred corruption of the flesh." The Necessary Erudition of a Christian Man admits the title of the whole human race ; and asserts, that God's promises are suspended on conditions, and suppose our endeavours to obedience. See Collyer, Vol. II. p. ii. b. iii. fol. 188. The homily against the Fear of Death was designed to shew that assurance of eternal happiness is the result of a godly and virtuous life. In a Preface to an Exposition of the Decalogue, by Bishop Hooper, is this remarkable passage : " It is not a Christian man's part to say that God hath written fatal laws, as " the Stoic, and with necessity of destiny violently pulleth one " by the hair into heaven, and thrusteth the other headlong " into hell. The cause of rejection or damnation, is sin in " man, which will not hear, neither receive, the promise of the " Gospel." See also Latimer's Sermons ; Redmayne's Treatise ; Jewell's Apol. c. 18 ; Homilies on the Misery of Man, and on declining from God ; Nichol's Vindication.

† See the Homilies, Liturgy, and Articles. Mosheim, and other writers, represent the Church of England as Calvinistical, in the points above referred to ; and Burnet states, that the first Reformers were generally in the Sublapsarian hypothe-

sis,

and saving efficacy of God's grace, which inspires and assists every good design, it ascribes to it no irresistible control, or irreverfible reſtraint *; but while it exhorts to fervent ſupplication, and reverence for the appointed means of its conveyance, it enforces alſo a vigilant regard to Scripture, of which every text commands obedience; and a cultivation of that righteous diſpoſition, which, under

ſis, which maintained a partial ſalvation by Chriſt. It has however been often ſhewn, that the Creed, Homilies, Liturgy, Articles, and Catechiſm of our Church, do not in their general conſtruction ſupport the Calvinian rigours, whatever ambiguous expreſſions ſome of them may contain. They admit the redemption of the whole world by Chriſt; the freedom of the human will; the acceptable nature of good works, and the poſſibility of a fall from grace. They decide not with St. Auſtin on the fate of infants unbaptized, but it is ſtated in the Rubric, that thoſe who are baptized, and die before actual ſin, are undoubtedly ſaved. There is therefore at leaſt reaſon to doubt, whether thoſe who framed the 17th Article deſigned, as Burnet deems probable, to aſſert the doctrine of abſolute decrees; and it is a plausible opinion at leaſt, that "by thoſe whom he hath choſen in Chriſt," from Ephes. ch. i. ver. 4. may be meant only thoſe whoſe obedience in Chriſt God foreſaw, "elect, according to the foreknowledge of God," 1 Peter, ch. i. ver. 2. The words admit of a conſtruction conſiſtent with the doctrine of conditional decrees; and the annexed cautions require that they ſhould be ſo interpreted. It is certain that the Reformers were fully impreſſed with the neceſſity of moral righteouſneſs, and inculcate its precepts with unwearied diligence; and if the Articles are Calviniſtical, it may be enquired, why the Calviniſts petitioned againſt the literal and grammatical ſenſe, on the appearance of Charles's declaration, and have ſo often wiſhed to alter them.

* Homily on the Reſurrection, and 16th Article.

the influence of descending favour, offers up the fragrance of acceptable productions to God.

If we consider the practical application of these doctrines, as illustrated in the external institutions and public worship of the Church, we shall find equal reason to approve the steady attention paid to the instructions of revelation. The sacramental appointments, restricted to the initiatory and commemorative rites, which were ordained by Christ himself as the effectual means and pledges of Divine grace, the lasting arguments of truth, the perpetual monuments, on which the principal doctrines of the faith are inscribed in indelible and impressive characters, were retained to animate the faith; and advance, by the operation of the Holy Ghost, the general work of salvation in our Church*.

The Liturgy, and Forms of Thanksgiving and Prayer, composed on early models, with

* Waterland has shewn, by historical statement, the utility of the sacraments, in an important point of view, as having confirmed and secured the prime articles of the faith, through successive ages; baptism hath guarded the doctrine of the Trinity, by a form which unquestionably demonstrates the existence of three persons in the sacred union; and the Eucharist has preserved the just doctrine of the Divine and human nature of Christ against various heretics. See Preface to the Doctrinal Use of the Christian Sacraments.

selection from ancient litanies, were perfected, after frequent revision, with admirable conformity to the great principles of veneration for the Divine attributes, and the expression, and encouragement of human gratitude and humility. Contrived to regulate the desultory fervors of the imagination, by the guidance of a chastened and reverential spirit of piety *, they are still calculated

* Prescribed forms of prayer are authorised by the example of the Jews, by the instructions of Christ, of the Apostles, and of the Primitive Church. See Old Test. passim. Matt. ch. vi. ver. 9. ch. xxvi. ver. 30. Ephes. ch. v. ver. 19. 1 Tim. ch. ii. ver. 1, 2. August. Sermon. 58. c. 10. tom. v. col. 342. Euseb. Hist. Basil. Epist. ad Neocæsar. Lightfoot's Works, Vol. I. p. 922; 942—6. The Liturgies ascribed to St. Matthew, St. Mark, and St. Peter, are considered as spurious; that attributed to St. James, was received as genuine by the Greek Church, is cited by the Council of Trullo, and maintained by ancient writers. Collyer, p. ii. b. iv. p. 252. Bingham's Antiq. b. ii. ch. vi. §. 2. There are others assigned to Clement, Basil, Chrysostom, and Ambrose. Prayers, as expressive of deliberate and permanent impressions, cannot be too cautiously worded. Unprepared strains of devotion are suitable only to the individual; and congregations should not be hurried away by the crude rhapsodies and irregular fervors which the judgment hath no time to consider. In the time of Cromwell, when the people would not bear the use of the Liturgy, some of the clergy formed their prayers from it, and repeated them, as extemporaneous, with great applause; as did Sanderfon and Bull; the latter of whom brought over many of his family to the Church service, on explaining to them the harmless artifice which he had used in thus pronouncing the baptismal service. See Nelson's Life of Bull. Perhaps a similar plan might be successfully adopted by the regular clergy in preaching; though it must be with great discretion. See 1 Cor. ch. ix. ver. 20.

to

to awaken and animate religious affections, and to unite the hearts and voices of Christ's Disciples, in the performance of social worship.

The ritual appointments and exterior arrangements of the Church, moderated with regard to the solemnity of public service, and with consideration of abuses long experienced, retained the decency of order and reverential observance*; at the same time that they were reformed from superfluous ceremonies and decorations, which had been found to mislead the fancy. The judicious spirit of sober and discriminating reflection perceived, that the signal and expressive token of admission to the Church of Christ †, and the outward testimony of respect at the Lord's Table, might be preserved with salutary effect; without exciting any false or mischievous notions of their intention, or affording any countenance to exploded errors. If the vestments of primitive decorum were objected to, as recalling the image of a

* See in Hutchinson's Hist. of Durham, Vol. I. p. 453, an account of irregularities which have resulted from a neglect of public authority.

† The cross in baptism was very ancient. See Tertull. de Coronâ; Cyprian. de Unitate; and Prudent. l. ii. c. sym.

corrupt

corrupt and superstitious priesthood, it was presumed that the objection would be transient; and expire with the memory of those, who were solicitous to preserve the resemblance. It was considered that abuses only, and the incentives to them, should be removed; and that some simple distinctions were suited to the appearance and offices of public celebration; and were authorised by the example and sentiments of every age. In particulars of subordinate concern, the impressions of ancient custom were not rudely disturbed; and the public authority was rather inclined to regulate, and check the increase of ceremonies, than to discountenance those harmless practices, which rest with the discretion of the individual.

While the pageantry and the offensive and unmeaning parts of the Romish service were suppressed; the affecting solemnity of choral celebration, and somewhat of the ancient pomp of worship, was reverently preserved. Those, who have wished to discard from our Church the assistance of an art, which is conceived to be subservient to the animation of celestial piety; and which is allowed to awaken religious affections, and to increase the warmth of earthly devotion, appear to spiritualize

spiritualize too much in notional refinement; and to cherish speculations more suited to solitary and abstracted contemplation, than to the general expression of social worship *. That the human heart should be allowed to profit by impressions of which it is most susceptible; and that a salutary influence should be imparted by ordinary means, is not unreasonable.

In these similar subjects of consideration, the precedents of sacred appointment should not be overlooked †. It is certain that the general classes of mankind are not insensible to the subsidiary aids of devotion; and that religion may be rendered more awful, in the eyes of many, by exterior circumstance. The venerable structures which did honour to the munificent piety of former times, and exhibit somewhat of august affinity to the solemn grandeur of religion; and even those decorations and productions of elegance which have no seductive tendency, may produce a salutary and beneficial effect. Our Reformers furnished no example to those, who, while they

* The Commissioners in 1689 proposed to put down chaunting in cathedrals.

† 1 Kings, ch. vii. 2 Chron. ch. vii. ver. 6. Psalm xcii. ver. 150. See also Rev. ch. v. ver. 8. ch. xiv. ver. 2. August. Confess.

“ dwell

“ dwell in cieled houses,” shew not an anxiety for the buildings dedicated to the Lord’s glory. They wished to discountenance external splendour but as it led to evil ; and were aware that religious edifices and religious worship might be despoiled of impressive ornament and reverential tokens, without being in any degree more suitable to the perfection of the Supreme Being. They relinquished with regret some of those representations, which, as silent monitors, instruct ; and contended with justifiable firmness against the spirit of innovation which endeavoured to destroy even the decent comeliness of the service that was preserved. Every testimony of unperverted regard to the glory of God they sought to encourage ; and had their councils been followed, the sequestered revenues of the Church, which were wasted in lavish expenditure and private embezzlement, would have been converted to public institutions, and have conferred lustre and substantial benefit on the country*.

Considered,

* Henry, in compliance with Cranmer’s advice, did erect six new bishoprics ; Westminster, Chester, Gloucester, Peterborough, Oxford, and Bristol ; he also converted some priories into deaneries, with provision for donations to the poor. This, however, by no means came up to the ideas of Cranmer, who had

Considered, or with reference to preceding abuses, or with regard to the permanent propensities of men, the external structure and ordinances of our Church, were framed with judicious and prudent regulation. Modelled in agreement with the instructions of revelation, they display a simplicity equally remote from superstition and irreverence ; and it appears that the practical, as well as the speculative, principles of the Reformation, are grounded on considerations decidedly important to the interests of religion.

Scripture, then, is not that precarious and uncertain rule, which it has been injuriously represented to be, by those, who would place infallibility on an human tribunal, and consecrate the decisions of earthly conceit. By a faithful adherence to it, as to a standard of salvation, the restorers of our Church were conducted through successive reigns with gradual advancement to truth ; seldom declining

had at first recommended to the King to appropriate 18,000 l. per annum as a revenue for eighteen bishops and cathedrals ; and had projected other liberal schemes. But though a revenue of upwards of 131,000 l. or, according to Lord Herbert's statement, of 161,000 l. had been collected from the suppressed houses ; 108,000 l. of which were assigned to the King (and the lands, in some instances, were not rated at a tenth part of their value), no sufficient supply remained ; the money being rapidly consumed in constructing and strengthening forts, in speculation, and improvident expence.

by

by any unconstrained relapse into error, and happily extricating themselves from the difficulties and impediments which embarrassed their progress.

If we consider what various and discordant opinions are set afloat by the agitation of any great and momentous question; how rarely agreement can be obtained, especially when religious prejudices and temporal interests are at the same time concerned, we must be convinced that no power but that of truth, could have effected the establishment of principles, so subversive of antient persuasions; so fatal to great and connected departments of society, as were those adopted at the Reformation. By a regard to this rule of Scripture, will all opinions be finally regulated in conformity to one essential faith, and not by listening to the vague and undefined pretences of tradition, or to the capricious suggestions of human vanity. By a reference to it, must every deviation from Christ's precepts be ascertained and reformed. Vain and fruitless were it to maintain what it condemns; vain and ineffectual were it to resist what it enjoins. Its force finally must predominate: not however as prejudiced conceptions may imagine, not as private construction may dictate, but as prevailing

prevailing evidence requires; as dispassionate statement and sober consideration determine, must its revelations be interpreted and received.

Anxiously as our Church hath laboured to illustrate every page of the sacred writings, it hath found no cause to depart from those essential principles, which, in consistency with early and unadulterated construction, were established as the basis of its regulations. Yet hath it no views which would obstruct the operation of truth. It evades no enquiry, it retreats from no temperate discussions; it will not however sacrifice its deliberate faith to every novel suggestion, nor alter its creed in accommodation to every new teacher. Discovering no accession of light, it refuseth to tamper with God's word, or to relinquish its well-founded conviction. Conscious that, " ere the present years were
 " sought out, and ere ever the inventions of
 " those that now sin were turned, before
 " they were sealed that have gathered faith
 " for a treasure *," all things relating to matters of doctrine were considered, it continues to respect the decisions of those who, with

* 2 Esdras, ch. vi. ver 5, 6.

pre-eminent advantages and comprehensive examination, determined. Willing to wave unavailing questions, and “ perversè disput-
“ ings,” and to promote the practical improvement of mankind, it is folicitous only that “ faith should flourish, and corruption
“ be overcome; and that the truth, which
“ has been so long without fruit*,” correspondent to its excellency, should be revered in its important maxims, and be obeyed in its salutary and eternal laws.

* 2 Esdras, ch. vi. ver. 28.

S E R M O N VII.

2 TIM. ii. 19, 20.

Nevertheless the foundation standeth sure, having this seal, the Lord knoweth them that are his; and let every one that nameth the name of Christ depart from iniquity. But in a great house there are not only vessels of gold and of silver, but also of wood and of earth; and some to honour, and some to dishonour.

IN condemning the profane and cankering vanity of those, who, “concerning the truth, had erred,” and who had “overthrown the faith of some,” the apostle reflects with consolation, that nevertheless the foundation standeth sure; on which all who should rest, as on a solid principle, should be confirmed under the seal* of the Divine ap-

* 2 Tim. ch. ii. ver. 19. 2 Cor. ch. i. ver. 22. ch. v. ver. 5. Ephes. ch. i. ver. 13. ch. iv. ver. 30.

probation ; characterized as the Disciples of God, amidst the unworthy, and sanctified as heirs of eternal glory.

In reverence for that sacred foundation, which was established as the ground-work of reform in this country, it is satisfactory to consider, that its immoveable principles were uniformly respected ; and hence it was, that those who “ set forward the work ” perceived it to prosper in their hands ; and like the returning captives who rebuilt the Temple of Jerusalem, “ having separated themselves “ from the filthiness of the land,” refused again “ to break the commandments of the “ Lord, and join in affinity with the people “ of abominations ;” and “ experienced the “ hand of God upon them for good *,” enabling them to finish it according to his commandment, notwithstanding the machinations of those who strove to frustrate their purpose, and by concealed and open industry to undermine and overturn the fabric.

In reviewing the struggles of that antichristian superstition which writhed under the foot of the victorious faith, and the exertions of

* Ezra, ch. iii. ver. 8. ch. iv. ver. 5. ch. vi. ver. 14, 21. ch. viii. ver. 22. ch. ix. ver. 14.

that

that wild spirit of innovation which rose into vigour, under powerful and ambitious patronage, we lament indeed, in their first mischief, some wounds inflicted on the strength and beauty of the ascendant form; but which disturbed not the steady and consistent firmness of the Reformation, preserving its character unshaken by danger, and moderate in its most triumphant success.

It should not detract from the reverence due to a Church, which hath "holden fast "Christ's name," and hath not denied his faith, if "a few things" should be found written against it; nor need there be any solicitude to deny that individuals have often deviated from the maxims of public profession. Impartial reflection may exult, however, on a retrospect of the operation of those principles which are consecrated in characteristic distinction of our Church; and the influence of which it would be injurious not to consider in the estimation of its pretensions. In the prosecution of our subject, therefore, we shall endeavour to illustrate their effect through successive periods; not by strained and unqualified panegyric, but by a reference to substantial and incontrovertible proofs of excellence.

Amidst the vicissitudes in which the Church may be contemplated, in the times that succeeded its full establishment, it will be found, if considered in its distinct character, to deserve admiration under three principal points of view. First, as having maintained a general truth and consistency in its doctrines; secondly, as distinguished for its moderation and tolerant spirit; and thirdly, as having advanced the essential interests of the country, as well by conspiring with the designs of civil liberty, as by promoting religious and moral virtues.

The changes which took place in the public Creed and worship from the first commencement of reform till its establishment under Elizabeth, were, if we except the violent and partial restitution of the Romish faith in the reign of Mary, but successive steps in the gradual advancement of true religion, and have been idly urged in proof of the fickle and inconstant faith of the nation.

That some compliant and interested men bowed with their sovereign to the idols which they had been enlightened to despise*, and sacrificed their faith to considerations of

* 2 Kings, ch. v. ver. 18.

earthly

earthly advantage, must indeed be confessed ; but no proofs can be adduced that the respectable and predominant part of the kingdom at any time relapsed into the delusions which they had abjured, however slowly they might relinquish some of the errors of inveterate superstition.

Since the period that the national faith was expressed in precise articles, ratified by the whole Clergy in Convocation *, it does not appear that it has been necessary to change those articles ; and whatever transient impressions may have been made by prevailing notions, on the public mind, they have not been allowed to operate so far, as to lead to the permanent introduction of popular fancies into the appointed forms of profession, or to vitiate established ordinances. If, by the incautious concessions, or hasty declarations, of any of its leading members, our Church has been betrayed into the apparent confirmation of principles incompatible with the sincerity of the Scriptural doctrine, it has speedily recovered its consistent tone ; and its

* Four Articles which stood in Edward's code, relating to the resurrection of the dead, the unperishable nature of the soul, the Millenarian heretics, and universal salvation, were omitted from the Articles confirmed in Convocation in 1562.

declared Creed and avowed faith have not varied *.

The chief diversity of sentiment, which has prevailed among its members, has been in those speculative and curious points, upon which the framers of our Articles, conscious of the clouds which encircle the Divine Councils, and not presuming to break the seals of God's judgments, designedly, used a great latitude of expression: desirous of leaving all to abound in their own sense; and willing to suppress the agitations and bitterness of controversy, by shutting up God's promises in general declarations of Scripture.

That doctrines, capable of being considered in such different points of view as are those which respect the extent of God's decrees, the liberty of the human will, and the operations of the Divine Grace, should continue, as they have ever done, to excite various opi-

† Archbishop Whitgift, with some of the Bishops, having been hastily led to subscribe to the Lambeth Articles, which were designed to bind the University of Cambridge to the rigours of Calvinism, was compelled, by Elizabeth's orders, to suppress them. Dr. Reynolds proposed them again, for acceptance, at the Hampton-Court conference; but was as unsuccessful in this as in many other points: they were, indeed, received, by Usher's management, in Ireland.

nions,

nions, is not surprising *. If, likewise, we allow something for the influence which the feelings have over the judgment, we shall not wonder that those, whose aversion to the Romish Church had been originally founded on the practical abuses which it countenanced, and had increased, under personal sufferings, in the exile which, in times of persecution, they endured, should, on their return to their country, betray somewhat of extravagance, in their disposition, to every principle hostile to the faith which they had renounced; and endeavour to circulate the doctrines and schemes which were most adverse to its interests.

The desire of commending the exclusive efficacy of the Divine atonement, in oppo-

* The difficulty of reconciling the prescience of God with the free-will of man, is a difficulty of natural religion. The existence of both must be admitted; though they never have been, nor probably ever will be, satisfactorily explained. St. Austin, who maintains the consistency of the doctrines, represents the denial of God's prescience as absolute insanity; and asserts a liberation from sin by grace. *Religiosus animus*, says the Father, *utrumque eligit, utrumque confitetur*. *De Civit. Dei*, l. v. c. 9. The speculative doctrines of faith, which did not affect the practice, were discussed with but little warmth at the first separation from the Church of Rome; points of discipline and ceremony engrossed the chief attention. As both the Arminian and Calvinistical parties claim the articles on these doubtful points, we must admit, at least, that they are framed with comprehensive latitude. It is remarkable that the Church of Rome did not decide on the five points canvassed at the Synod of Dort.

sition

sition to the fancies of mortal intercession and human merit, hurried the Reformers on the Continent, and those who imbibed their ideas, to dilate, with incautious and excessive enthusiasm, on gratuitous justification ; so as to invalidate the important doctrine of free-will, and to disparage the necessary condition of obedience.

The disposition to reward and employ men who had suffered for their adherence to religion ; and the indulgence shewn to such opinions as had no reference to ancient abuses, nor interfered with present regulations, occasioned the reception of many persons into ecclesiastical departments who were strongly tinctured with Calvinian principles ; which were industriously propagated * and patronized by many eminent men † ; and listened to the more readily by many of our

* The Puritans used every art to advance their opinions. In an impression of the Common Prayer, published with pretended authority by Richard Jugge, in 1577, the whole order of private baptism and of confirmation was omitted. The Geneva Bible was printed with mischievous notes ; and in an impression of Field's Bible, worked off under the Usurpation, though not printed till 1660, the word *ye* was substituted for *we*, in Acts, ch. vi. ver. 3.

† As by Cecil, Leicester, Walsingham, Sir Francis Knollis, &c.

establishment,

establishment *, as conceived to be merely doctrinal; and unconnected with the notions of external discipline, which some, in opposition to the unvaried sentiments and institutions of the Church in preceding times, began to entertain. On the other hand, it will not be thought extraordinary, that, when speculative fancies began to swell into mischievous schemes, and their advocates appeared to brood, with sullen discontent, over projects of religious and political hostility, these principles should be more accurately examined; and the enlightened members of our Church more loudly contend for the Arminian doctrines †, in those points wherein they were rationally

* Hume represents above 500 Clergymen to have subscribed to a book of discipline in 1584. Few of the respectable Clergy could have wished to hatch the Presbyterian government under the wings of episcopacy, as Heylin expresses himself. See Hume, note R. to Vol. V. 8vo. Neal's Hist. Vol. I. p. 482; Dawes' and Strype's Life of Whitgift.

† The Calvinian sentiments spread considerably among the Clergy in the reign of Elizabeth, though but with partial effect, as appears from the public professions of faith; from the delay in the upper House of Convocation in ratifying Nowell's Catechism; from the suppression of the Lambeth Articles, and the preaching of Baroe, Harinet, and others. See Articles, Homilies, &c; Preface to Nowell's Catechism; Baroe Prælect. in Gen. xx. ver. 3. & Prælect. 30; Harinet's Sermon, in Ezek. ch. iii. ver. 11; and notes to sixth Sermon. On the accession of James the First, the Puritans conceived great expectations, and Dr. Reynolds appeared in his fur gown at the Hampton-Court conference;

rationally opposed to the harsh and rigorous principles of Calvinism; which were relinquished by the Clergy in proportion as they were canvassed; and retained an influence chiefly on those, whose gloomy and fanatic temper was favourable to their operation; and who appeared to burn with much of that spirit which "lusteth to envy."

Neither is it difficult to understand, wherefore it happened, that, as the political bias verged towards the depressed adherents of the Romish cause, with design to counteract the

rence; but though the King retained, perhaps, some prejudices in favour of the speculative doctrines (however averse to the discipline) of the Calvinists, he was not, probably, at the commencement of his reign, very firmly attached to the doctrine of predestination, or Dr. Bancroft, who was little disposed to thwart a sovereign, whom he protested to have been unparalleled from the time of Christ, would not at the Conference have called it "a desperate doctrine." The vehement zeal, which the King displayed against Vorstius, was founded on abhorrence of the blasphemous opinions which he had published, and on political considerations. The English Divines, who, at the Synod of Dort, were distinguished for their moderation, rejected the Supralapsarian doctrines; though they adhered to the opinions of St. Austin. Heylin says, that they were instructed not to oppose the doctrine of universal redemption; and Neal admits, that they did not touch upon the received limitations, which restrict the passages relating to Christ's dying for the whole world, to the elect. The decrees of the Synod obtained but little respect in England, where the Arminian doctrines were soon espoused by the King, and the greatest part of the Clergy. Heylin's *Introduct. to the Life of Laud, Moheim, &c.*

exertions

exertions of the rising sect ; * the leading characters of our Church, who endeavoured to render its service more venerable and impressive by a revival of its ancient splendour, should be subjected to the imputation of wishing to return into the polluted bosom of Rome ; an imputation, which, however merited by individuals, and however it might animate the hopes of the ever-sanguine Romanists, was frequently unjust in its application †.

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* James the First has been represented to have inclined to popery towards the end of his reign ; and though it is not likely that he would have been disposed to resign the supremacy, he appears to have considered some grounds of distinction between the two Churches as less considerable than they really were. Charles the First disclaimed, on the scaffold, any disposition to that religion ; his Queen, however, and some of the Court, appear to have entertained the wish for a re-union with the Roman Church. In both these reigns strong suspicions operated to the prejudice of the Court, and influenced some to change the profession of their faith. See Birch's Hist. View of the Negotiations between the Church of England, France, and Brussels, published in 1745 ; Winwood's Memoirs ; Tyndal's Continuation of Rapin, Vol. II. c. 18 ; Harris's Historical and Critical Account of the Life and Writings of James I. Berington's Memoirs of Panzani. Charles II. in his last illness, received the sacrament from Romish Priests ; and papers were found, after his death, written with his own hand, in favour of the Romish Communion. See Hume.

† Laud had been twice offered a Cardinal's hat ; but whatever propensity he displayed towards superstitious ceremonies, he protested, at the hour and instant of his death, that he never endeavoured the subversion of law or religion : and we know that

was the criterion of sanctity, daily brought forth its new sects *, the scattered ministers of our Church, though they beheld its structure levelled, together with the broken pillars of the state, "even to the ground," collected, in deprivation and retirement, their faithful congregations; kept alive the flame of true religion, and preserved the uncorrupted sincerity of its faith and worship †, till it pleased God, after trial of their faith in affliction, to raise them again to exaltation.

So also, when the disgust, which had been excited by strained and affected piety, terminated in levity and disregard to religion, the members of our Church, by their example and writings, supported its cause; repelled, with admirable temper and power of reasoning, the efforts of profane ridicule and

consists in the commission of such crimes, and that there is no such thing as unrighteousness or sin, independent of conscience and opinion; and if any person shall be convicted of maintaining such frightful doctrine, he shall suffer six months imprisonment for the first, and exile for the second offence." Collier's Eccles. Hist. p. ii. b. 9.

* At that time, says Nichol, it was a most signal mark of a saint to be the author of some monstrous opinion, p. 59; the preachers prayed for and against one another. See Walton, in his Life of King; Edwards Gangræna, Epist. Dedicat. This writer reckons up 176 heretical and blasphemous opinions maintained in the course of four years.

† As did Bull, Jeremy Taylor, Sanderfon, &c.

licentious

licentious infidelity, and maintained the eternal laws of moral and religious obligation, against the subtle misrepresentations with which captivating genius and perverted learning laboured to countenance the corruption of a libertine age *. Afterwards, when the delusions of returning popery began to allure its fickle converts, and to intrance them to a forgetfulness of the instructions of wisdom, the advocates of our establishment animated attention to a review of the whole subject of difference subsisting between the two Churches; in which they displayed an accuracy of distinction, that hath been seldom equalled; and a force of illustration, that hath never been surpassed. By their industry were the arts of insidious and persuasive eloquence again defeated; many dissenters brought over to a Church thus bearing distinguished testimony to truth; and the Pro-

* Dr. Seth Ward, Tenison, Dr. Henry More, Cudworth, Cumberland, and others, successfully opposed the mischievous principles of Hobbes. Burnet awakened and convinced the Earl of Rochester, with a piety and force of argument that must affect every mind; Berkley and Wotton exposed the tendency of Shaftesbury's writings; and Clarke pointed out the arts and falsehood of Toland and Collins. See Wood and Leland.

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testant cause confirmed with irresistible weight of evidence *.

In later times, the stores of learning have been brought forward, in the service of Christianity, with continued industry, by the writers of our Church; and the general truth and sincerity of our faith so fully demonstrated, in opposition to every rising heresy, that those who would vindicate its claim to regard, have little to do but to profit by their labours, and draw forth the deductions of their research.

If we advert to the second favourable point of view, in which our Church may be considered, we shall find abundant reason to admire that temperate spirit, which hath uniformly guided it in a course of moderation; and gradually separated the sting and rancour of intolerance from the animation of religious zeal.

From the first moment of the exertion of that reason, of which the Reformation as-

* See Preservative against Popery, containing a selection of many admirable Discourses, by the most eminent Divines of the reign of James II. among which are productions under the distinguished names of Burnet, Cave, Hickes, Patrick, Sherlock, Grove, Tillotson, Stillingfleet, Kidder, Wake, Whitby, &c.

serted

ferted the rights, our Church disclaimed the pretensions to infallibility; and the presumption of an exclusive title to salvation, which had characterized the Roman faith; and produced that temper of bigotry and persecution, which hath disgraced its professors in every age. It dealt out no anathema against other congregations, though it proclaimed the conditions of the Evangelical Covenant, and reprobated the notion of indifference as to the choice of faith *. Extending the folds of an ample charity, it embraced, with the affection of common interests and hopes, all who were inclined to profit by such light and assistance as should be afforded. It rejected

* The 18th Article condemns the presumptuous fancy, that salvation is to be obtained by or in virtue of every law or sect; maintaining, nearly in the language of Scripture, that there is no other name but that of Jesus Christ whereby men must be saved; by which is not asserted, as Mr. Hume states, that no Heathen, how virtuous soever, can escape an endless state of misery, but only that Christ is the sole cause of salvation, and that those to whom the Gospel is proposed can have no ground of confidence but by accepting its conditions. See Acts, ch. iv. ver. 12. Mark, ch. xvi. ver. 16. John, ch. xiv. ver. 6. 1 John, ch. v. ver. 11, 12. Those who have not heard of the Gospel, our Church considers as out of the covenant of grace, but not therefore destined to condemnation; aware of the texts in Rom. ch. ii. ver. 12—14, 15. ch. x. ver. 14. Mr. Gibbon, with sagacity equal to that of Mr. Hume, discovers an uncharitable spirit in the 8th Article, if there be not a typographical error. See Hume, ch. xxxv. Ann. 1551; Gibbon, ch. xv. note 7; Cranmer's Book against Gardiner, fol. 372.

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not

not from its communion even those, whose errors it had abjured; departing from their faith, only as that faith had receded from the standard of its fidelity; and holding forth the right hand of fellowship to all who professed the essential doctrines of revelation *; with a moderation, the conciliatory tendency of which, awakened the solicitude of its enemies, who insidiously laboured to defeat its intention, and to counteract its influence †.

If, after maintaining the sufficiency of the Scriptures, and the decisions of the primitive ages, our Church for some time imposed the doctrines of human invention; if, after asserting the rights of a conscientious freedom of judgment, it constrained the exertions of the mind,—not by a justifiable rejection from offices of instruction and confidence, but by measures of obtrusive, and even sanguinary compulsion, it was in rare and so-

* The Romanists, even in the persons of ambassadors from foreign countries, continued to resort to our Churches for many years, as Lord Chief Justice Coke hath informed us; so also did the Calvinists. The Pope, by an injunction in 1569, directed the Romanists to withdraw. Heylin states, that the Puritans set the example. Hist. Presbyt. l. vi. p. 258; Andrews, Tortura Torti.

† The policy of Rome did not deem it advantageous to the Roman cause, that any toleration or indulgence should be granted.

litary

litary instances, ere its awakened spirit had thrown off every prejudice of a corrupt faith; ere its security rested on a settled foundation, and amidst the struggles of numerous and active enemies, who laboured with unremitted endeavours to effect its destruction.

The few deeds of cruelty which stain its annals, it deploras with one common sentiment; lamenting the errors of lingering bigotry*, the prejudice, which impeded the operation of principles, gradually disclosed and perfected.

To the resolute temper of a vigorous, and sometimes rigid government, must be ascribed the laws which operated in successive reigns †
with

* The conduct even of Cranmer, in the affairs of Lambert and Joan Bocher, has imprinted a deep spot on his memory.

† Joan Bocher, and a Dutchman, were burnt in Edward's days. Two Anabaptists were executed, in the reign of Elizabeth, on the score of religion; many more were imprisoned, harassed, and banished, but chiefly on the charge or suspicion of treason. The general proceedings of the High Commission Court, and the oath, *ex officio*, were very arbitrary. Elizabeth's proceedings were grounded, however, on two unexceptionable principles: the first, that conscience ought not to be controlled, but by the force of truth, and the aid of time and instruction; and that causes of conscience, when they exceed their bounds, and grow to be matters of faction, lose their nature; and that sovereign princes ought distinctly to punish their practices and contempt, though coloured with the pretence of reason and religion. She was reluctantly led to depart from mild measures. See Walsingham's Letters, concerning the Queen's proceedings;

with penal severity against the assailants of its constitution ; who, masking malicious designs under the pretence of conscience, or framing political schemes with religious enthusiasm, conspired to the subversion as well of the civil, as of the ecclesiastical departments.

For the capricious and indiscriminate acts of tyranny in the reign of Henry *, and for some transient traces of vindictive persecution in subsequent times, we have no apology to offer ; as they must be imputed to that mistaken zeal for religion, which blindly unsheaths the sword of violence to enforce its precarious dictates ; which in former ages hath consecrated the banners of cruelty ; and displayed the cross of Christ, but to spread abroad the horrors of devastation and blood. Those, however, who have reflected on the dangerous activity of that unsubdued spirit

ings ; Burnet, Vol. III. p. 419 ; and Neal, Vol. I. p. 598 ; Dodd's Christian Hist. In the reign of James I. two Arians were burnt, and a phrenzied man, who called himself the Holy Ghost. James, however, in general, combated with argument. He established a college at Chelsea, composed of 20 persons, who were to be employed in the systematical refutation of Papists and Puritans. Moderate Romanists now admit, that the conduct of their ancestors provoked the severities of those reigns.

* Under the operation of the statute of the Six Articles, Papists and Protestants were conveyed to execution on the same hurdle.

which

which animated the cause of the depressed party in the reign of Elizabeth * and James ; which was instigated by the Roman pontiff, to whom it continued to assign a temporal and universal sceptre, and a deposing authority † ; which leagued with the formidable and threatening enemies of the country at critical and alarming moments ; which every where cherished a suspected flame, and betrayed the materials of dangerous preparation, will not dispute the necessity of some

* The Romanists designed to subvert the constitution in State as well as Church ; to establish the inquisition under a less odious name ; to depose the Queen ; to new-model the Parliament, with a mixture of ecclesiastics ; and also to change the mode of trial by juries ; “ twelve silly men,” as they were called. See Parsons’ Memorial, with Gee’s notes, p. i. b. iii. ch. 4 ; Foulis’s History of Treason ; Dodd’s Church History.

† See Jewell’s View of a Seditious Bull ; Burleigh’s Tracts, p. 14 ; Plowden’s Church and State, b. i. ch. 9. b. ii. ch. 7 ; Conspiracy for pretended Reformation, &c. It is a curious circumstance, that an answer to Sir Henry Saville’s translation of King James’s Apology for the Oath of Allegiance, which was made by command of the Conclave by Francisco Suarez, and entitled *Defensio Fidei Catholicæ*, was interlined by the Inquisition at Rome with the doctrine of deposing and of killing princes ; though detested by the writer of the Answer. See Dr. King’s Letter to Walker, prefixed to Hooker’s Ecclesiastical Polity. The proceedings of the Jesuits to re-establish Popery, exhibit a most remarkable continuance of mischievous designs providentially defeated. The seminaries at Rome, Rheims, Valladolid, Saville, St. Omer’s, and Douay, countenanced by the resentment of Philip and the Pope, were schools of men instructed to avail themselves of every passion and occasion.

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extraordinary

extraordinary severities for the security of the kingdom.

Those, likewise, on the other hand, who have considered the mischievous and offensive conduct * of the opposite party, which fanned every spark of discontent, and encouraged every breeze of disaffection ; which established its nurseries of dissension in every part, and inflamed them with the fanatic notion of their destination to establish a pattern of imaginary perfection of civil and religious discipline † ; those who review the character of such times, cannot be surprised at discovering some acts of rigour in the administration of the secular

* Scurrilities and insults were daily issued from the press and the pulpit, even in the time of Elizabeth. See Martin Mar-Prelate ; More Work for the Cooper ; Theses Martinianæ, and other seditious and schismatical trash. These were answered in the same style of low pleasantries : as by Pasquil's Apology, a Counter Cuff given to Martin, a Fig for my Godson, &c. Weekly meetings were established for consultation by the Puritans, and a consistory set up in London. These took upon them to appoint fasts ; and they avowed the design of introducing the discipline. Their proceedings were so seditious, that Leicester and Walsingham deserted them ; and Heylin states, that at a meeting at Cambridge, at which Cartwright and Perkins were present, they went so far as to take into consideration how the archbishops, bishops, and other dignitaries, with their appendages, should be provided for when ejected from their preferment.

† The enthusiastic fancies of election, and the perverted declarations of promises of Scripture, were industriously employed to kindle a spirit of enterprize among the people.

power :

power: or cannot at least dispute, that they resulted from political apprehension; and not from the suggestion of the Church, which, where its voice was respected, had betrayed no intemperance of spirit; had shewn no wish to retaliate the cruelties of Mary's reign *; and by its mild and conciliatory temper had sometimes gained its adversaries to reverence its decisions; and pleaded, with effectual supplication, for the condemned †.

By the discreet and temperate measures of the Reformers, persuading and exhorting men to a consideration of the evidence of truth, was the cause of reformation advanced; and not by violence or persecution. While the Scriptures were commended, the spirit which they breathe was insensibly adopted; and if we reflect on the operation of human passions, and consider how invariably their suggestions mingle with the best designs, we shall find subject of admiration, that the cause of religion could, with so few exceptions, be

* Even Bonner escaped, though there were grounds for proceeding against him, for having exceeded the sanguinary commissions which he had received.

† See the accounts of Whitgift's conduct towards Snape, Cartwright, and Udal; see also his Letter to Beza; likewise the Relation of Hooker's behaviour to Travers; Preface to Ecclesiastical Polity, &c.

allowed

allowed to prevail by its own force ; and that amidst anxious solicitude, and conflicting interests and difficulties, it should establish its decrees with so little violence.

Look we back to the vast structure of superstition which had been raised by the accumulations of successive ages ; behold it darkening the land by its shadow ; revered by the multitude, and defended by a zealous and powerful combination of the elevated members of society ; see it collapse with sudden fall ; without injury to the country ; without even involving its corrupt supporters in its ruin, any farther than as their interests were immediately implicated and entwined with the departments which were removed, and we shall have cause to venerate the powerful operation of truth, which could thus break up and destroy a fabrick so stupendous.

It has been often urged as a want of moderation in our Church, that it did not concede a little to the prejudices of those “ weak brethren,” who first separated from its communion on some inconsiderable objections to the rites and vestments of its reformed service. If, however, we reflect how few and simple were the particulars of external observance

fervance which were insisted on; how justifiable they were from ancient precedent and general approbation; and how necessary it was that inward and spiritual impressions should be signified by exterior tokens of indication and reverence, we shall be inclined to think that the temper, which was offended at the decent and expressive ceremonial that was retained, must have been blinded by indiscriminate zeal, and solicitous to discover blemishes*; and that as the question of the right of the Church to direct in concerns of external arrangement and order was involved in the dispute, we should not condemn the firmness which opposed itself to the restless spirit of innovation. At

* Walsingham did offer to procure an indulgence for the Puritans, as to the surplice, kneeling at the sacrament, and the cross in baptism. They answered, That not an hoof should be left behind. Lord Burleigh directed some of the discontented party to prepare a liturgy: one class accordingly devised a plan upon the Geneva system, to which six hundred objections were made by a second class; and the alterations were disapproved by a third, against whose ideas a fourth class offered their objections; when the prudent Statesman dismissed them all, assuring them, that, when they did agree in any liturgy universally acceptable, he would assist them. See Heylin's History of Presbyterians, l. vii. fol. 506. The author of the Confessional admits, that some persons separated from our Church, whose pride, passion, and self-conceit, knew no bounds; and whom, probably, the most reasonable forms would not have retained. See also Calamy's Life of Baxter, p. 497; by which it appears, how difficult it would have been to satisfy the most moderate Nonconformists.

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the same time we cannot but with sorrow reflect that a separation, originating in such slight causes, should, with respect to many, have widened with increasing departure, into a schism in great and fundamental doctrines.

If we prosecute the enquiry, we shall find, that, when with the most fatal excesses “ religion was turned into rebellion, and faith “ into faction,” the sincere servants of Christ, who scarcely breathed under the terror and oppressive sway of those who had clamoured for toleration *, nourished no vindictive hatred against their oppressors; though they beheld, amidst scenes of terror and destruction, their sacred edifices profaned and defaced, and the rights and offices of their appointed stations invaded and spoiled †.

When

* Hume states the Independents to have been the first sect which, during its prosperity and adversity, always adopted the principles of toleration. Popery and Prelacy, however, he allows, were by them treated with rigour; and they deemed the doctrine of fate essential to all religion. Hume, ch. 57. The Presbyterians called toleration an hideous monster; the great Diana of the Independents; and had no wish to encourage it. In the treaty of the Isle of Wight, they refused to allow to Charles the use of the Common Prayer-Book in his own family. In a state of subjection they pleaded for toleration, as all dependent sects do, but forgot it when in power.

† From 1641 to 1647, 115 ministers were deprived in London, exclusive of St. Paul's and Westminster. More were deprived

When the unfettled and incoherent frame, which had been upheld by the vigour of a single arm, fell to pieces; and the Church, on the return of exiled monarchy, was raised from the dust, it was stained with no cruelty towards its forgiven enemies. The decree of justice dispossessed of the seats which they had seized, those persons only who had occupied them to the prejudice of the rightful claimants; or who refused conformity to the appointed ordinances of the Church*, and declarations of allegiance to the civil government.

If, when schemes of comprehension were projected, the advocates of the establishment were very vehemently charged with inflexibility in refusing to concede any change; it should be remembered, that little hope could be entertained of agreement with men who persisted in a separation, condemned by all disinterested and impartial observers†; who pro-

prived in the space of three years, than in the reign of Mary. The benefices were filled with base and subservient ministers. See Walker's Attempt towards recovering an Account of the Sufferings of the Clergy.

* See Statute of Uniformity, 13 & 14 Car. II. c. 4. Above 2000 lost their preferment, and must be allowed the credit of a sincerity which deserved consideration.

† As by Calvin, Beza, &c. See also Monf. le Moyne's, Monf. de l'Angle's, and Monf. Claude's Letters, in Collier, Vol. II. p. ii. b. ix.

posed,

posed, as the conditions of union, a modification of the episcopal form of government in accommodation to the Presbyterian model; the abolition of unpurged ceremonies and distinctive vestments; and the adoption of a new liturgy, drawn up by a single hand unpractised in the forms of antiquity *. The severe prohibitions, which were for a time enacted against seditious conventicles, established under pretence of the exercise of religion, were framed in discouragement of that rebellious spirit which continued occasionally to display its unextinguished flames †, and were seldom enforced except where the safety of the State was concerned. The Sovereign, who had been himself oppressed, was taught by the charitable instructions of our Church, as well as by the voice of sectaries ‡, how odious, both to God and man, an oppressor must be; and in his

* See the Account of the Proceedings at the Savoy Conference.

† As by the rising of the fifth monarchy men, and the conspiracy of the Rump Parliament in 1663, the Rye-House Plot, &c. See Hist. of Plot Inform. p. 136; Titles of London Cases; Grove's Persuasive, &c.

‡ See the manly Preface to Barclay's Apology. The Quakers suffered in this reign; but it was chiefly for refusing to pay tithes, and take the oath required by the law. As their refusal seems to have been dictated by religious scruples, we may regret the operation of the law, and approve of the expedients adopted for their relief.

reign

reign the only remaining decree of persecution which disgraced its laws was repealed *.

From this period, though opposite interests have combined in unnatural union, and persisted with unaltered enmity against the Church, it hath encouraged an increasing spirit of moderation and indulgence ; and rested, as to human protection, for security only on its legal and constitutional barriers, and on the conviction excited by the admirable vindications of its cause.

The moderation and tolerant spirit of our Church having been sufficiently shewn, we shall proceed to demonstrate that it has advanced the essential interests of the country ; as well by conspiring with the designs of civil liberty, as by promoting moral and religious virtue.

The deliverance from the Papal supremacy, was, as we have seen, an emancipation

* By virtue of the Statute 29 Car. II. c. 9. the Writ de Hæretico comburendo was abolished ; “ the last badge of persecution in the English law,” says Blackstone, b. iv. ch. 4. An heretic is still liable to be imprisoned, by the writ de Excommunicato Capiendo, till he make satisfaction to the Church, which properly foregoes the power, from a conviction that speculative errors, which countenance no practical evil, should be controlled by force of argument, and not by imprisonment and bonds ; and that the cause of truth can be little promoted by the extortion of official fees.

from

from civil, as well as from spiritual tyranny ; and every apprehension of the return of the Romish faith, has been connected in calm and considerable reflection, as well as in popular fears, with the apprehension of the return of arbitrary power. Those who vindicated the rejection of the Papal usurpation, opened the great principles of our constitutional security ; and every struggle for a removal of restrictions on the conscience, has facilitated the exertions of political wisdom. Religious and civil liberty flourish under the same patronage, and expand by the same favour. From the beginning of the Reformation, till its completion in the reign of Elizabeth, the advocates of the one were the advocates of the other ; and it was only when the pretence of liberty was made “ a cloak of malicioufness,” that the members of our Church were placed in opposition to those who professed a wish to advance the cause of general security ; and whose measures, however they might eventually contribute to the attainment of equitable provisions, were certainly intemperate in their execution, and extremely destructive in their immediate operation and tendencies.

In the first reigns which succeeded the assignment of the supremacy to the sovereign power,

power, the pretensions of the prerogative were domineering, and impatient of control. The flattery, however, which inscribed the diadem with a sacred and indefeasible title, and chained the subject in slavish and unresisting submission to the throne, originated not with the reformed Clergy; though it continued to be supported by them in conformity with a prevailing persuasion, and in opposition to the wild enthusiasm of those who sought rudely to tear away every ancient sanction of authority; and whatever may have been the servile language of individuals who had flourished under Royal favour; or the intemperate zeal of loyalty, heightened by the sense of danger, and by generous attachment to a declining cause*, it does not appear that the ministers

* The Homilies breathed the spirit of the time in which they appeared; and the doctrine of unqualified submission was as much the doctrine of the nobility and Parliament as of the clergy. In the reign of Elizabeth, Gifford, a clergyman, was degraded for preaching a limited obedience. In the reign of James, there was a Bishop Andrews at Court as well as a Bishop Neile; though certainly the clergy in that reign pushed the doctrine of submission much too far; and farther indeed than the King himself approved, when it interfered with his politics; as on the occasion of his assisting the Hollanders against Spain. See Biograph. Britan. art. Abbott. Their tone however was highest when the opposite principles prevailed to the most extravagant extent; and it was increased in 1640, by loyal apprehensions for a Sovereign harshly treated and sorely
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ministers of our Church have been at any time insensible to the claims, or unfriendly to the temperate exertions of liberty : on the contrary, they have in signal instances been its distinguished favourers. They awakened the spirit which accomplished that revolution, to which the friends of freedom look with fondest veneration *, as to the renovated basis of the constitution ; and on many occasions they have assisted in the struggles, and gloried in the triumphs, of patriotism.

If, in general, they have been found to plead for established powers, and sought to moderate the excesses of popular innovation ; if they have laboured to implant the principle of a conscientious obedience on the ground of religious duty, and have uniformly opposed those wild and pernicious notions

pressed. When the sad necessity existed, a principle of becoming resistance was to be found among the clergy. The objectionable doctrine died away with the Nonjurors, except when the voice of party occasionally revived it.

* The conduct of the clergy, at the period of the Revolution, has been often celebrated ; especially with respect to the proceedings of the Universities, Bishop Compton, the archbishops and six bishops ; the refusal to read the King's insidious declaration, and the general opposition to the ecclesiastical commission : for which the whole body received the thanks of Parliament. See Journals of House of Commons in 1686 ; Bishop of London's Sermons, Vol. II. Sermon VII. &c.

which

which unsettle states, it is because they have consulted the real interests of society.

Conversant with the examples of former times, and the profound reasonings of learned writers, and convinced of the solidity of those principles which are founded on consideration of the permanent passions of men, they listen not to theories which are framed without respect to the restrictions which long experience hath commended ; they consent not to sacrifice certain blessings for contingent advantage ; they embark not on tempestuous seas for precarious profit. Any erroneous sentiments which they may have occasionally maintained on subjects of warm discussion, and affecting various interests, have been exaggerated, as the more exceptionable from men from whom reasonable councils are generally expected, and generally heard ; have left a strong impression ; and often cast an undeserved discredit on the body of a profession, marked out by a distinct character, and viewed under the colourings of a transmitted fame from age to age. But if we judge of their general principles as collected from the writings of acknowledged authority, they will be found to express a just moderation on subjects of public interest ; to re-

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present,

present, in consistency with the voice of revelation, the general good to be the object and end of all government; and to suppose authority, as ratified by that sanction, and obedience commanded on that consideration.

The true interests of the country have been effectually advanced by the voice of religion, as conspiring with the temperate exertions of freedom; and it will appear also unquestionable to every candid and impartial enquirer, that the essential welfare of the kingdom has been, in every period, considerably promoted by its reformed preachers; whose object has ever been to regulate the passions by the guidance of the understanding, which they have sought to enlighten. The first precepts conveyed by the ministers of restored Christianity, taught the people no longer to confide in the mechanical appointments which had been substituted for the vital works of Christianity, by those who had availed themselves of religious affections to impress the mind with prejudicial images*. They instructed them to abide by the laws of Christ's Testament, and informed them that they were "not redeemed

* See the injunctions of Henry in 1536; of Edward in 1547; of Elizabeth in 1551, compared with that of Mary in 1554.

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“ with corruptible things, as silver and gold ;
 “ from their vain conversation, as received by
 “ tradition from their fathers ; but with the
 “ precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb with-
 “ out blemish and without spot.” Thus were
 the people led to abhor their ancient superstition * of ceremonious offices, of venal indulgence † and numerated services, and to labour for the cultivation of a just faith, demonstrated by the expression of practical righteousness ‡. The same useful instruction hath uniformly continued to promote a sound and unchanging morality, established on revealed principles ; hath instilled its early lessons into the youth whose education it superintends, and infused its unceasing maxims through every class and department of society.

It comporteth not with that spirit of humility, which adorns the profession of the Christian service, to display its pretensions to the regard of men, any farther than is neces-

* Jam primum senio docilis tua tempora Roma
 Erubuit, pudet exacti temporis, odit
 Præteritos fœdis cum religionibus annos.

† Cælum venale deusque.

‡ ——— Religionem
 Quæ filo infertis numerat sua murmura Bacchis.

MANTUAN.

sary to illustrate the tendency of the principles which we seek to commend; but it were a derogation from the cause we plead, and an omission injurious to the claims of distinguished virtue, to withhold a testimony of praise from those eminent men, who have streamed in the radiance of a long succession, the examples and ornaments of our Church. Where so many have contributed to the advancement of the work that has engaged our attention, we have not selected individuals for partial celebration; though many names, dear to remembrance, may have seemed to challenge peculiar attention. The principles established in our Church are accepted on the ground of their own excellency, and require not the sanction of authority. They were commended, without assumption of personal ascendancy, by those who were willing that their reputation should fade in the transcendancy of Christ's glory, and their instructions resolve themselves into his laws. Yet from the days of those, "by whom the Lord wrought great power at the beginning," when the rising cause derived a lustre from the candid and disinterested virtues of Cranmer, the unshaken firmness and enlightened mind of Ridley, the earnest zeal of repentant Latimer,

Latimer, how many have flourished in the lineage of the sacred order, whose memorial might be produced with impressive effect! Since where were any among those "who have left a name behind them, that their praises might be reported," more justly famous as "leaders of the people by their knowledge of learning meet for their direction," "eloquent in their instructions?" Where were any more "peaceable in their habitations," "more honoured as the glory of their times," "giving counsel by their understanding, and declaring prophecies;" "merciful men, whose righteousness hath not been forgotten;" foremost in the ranks of literature; recorded in every monument of benevolence; eminent in the circles of domestic virtue*.

May those who succeed in their ministry walk in their footsteps, and emulate the excellency of their lives; may "the people tell also of their wisdom, and the congregation shew forth their praise:" may the Almighty, with protecting care of his Church, "give them wisdom in their heart to guide his people in righteousness, that their good things be not abolished, and that their glory may endure for ever†."

* Eccus. ch. xlv.

† Eccus. ch. xlv. ver. 26.

S E R M O N V I I I .

EPHES. iv. 3.

Endeavouring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace.

ON a contemplation of the full scope, and perfect design of the Gospel, it appears to be intended for the promotion of a faith in Christ, that may illustrate its excellency by the expression of benevolent affections to men. A dispensation which reveals the Divine attributes, and describes the infirmity of the human nature, endeavours to awaken religious sentiments by motives of gratitude and intimations of dependence; and the communications of good will towards mankind stipulate, as the conditions of favour, a cultivation of those moral virtues, which, while they conciliate peace on earth, contribute to
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an improvement susceptible of heavenly recompence.

The intimate reliance and union that are imported by those declarations, which respect the presidency of Christ in supreme connection with his Church ; and the permanent residency of the Spirit, sanctifying the bodies of the Disciples of our Lord in adaptation to such affinity ; furnish to religious reflection the most awful considerations to enforce an imitation of that great example by which we are required to model ourselves in conformity to “ one body and one Spirit.”

To the preservation of the coherence and union of the frame, which was formed in dependency on him who was the mystical head, the inspired writers display an earnest solicitude ; labour to produce “ the effectual working in the measure of every part,” only to advance a proportioned and improving symmetry of the body, “ increasing unto the edifying of itself in love.” With fervent and reiterated supplication they intreat the brethren, in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, that they “ all speak the same thing, and “ that there be no divisions among them, “ but that they be perfectly joined together “ in the same mind and in the same judgment ;”

“ment;” that rejecting classes of distinction, and titles of sectaries, they should all unite in “one faith,” under “one Lord.” For trivial matters, and “foolish questions, and “oppositions of science, falsely so called*,” it is forbidden to enter into vain and unprofitable controversy, and “doubtful disputations†;” while in perfect consistency with these principles, and with design to secure the integrity of the body, are those, who are called in one hope, instructed to “take heed unto their doctrine‡;” to contend for the faith once delivered to the saints; to “hold fast the form of sound words§,” and the man who is an heretic after the first and second admonition to reject||.

From the tendency of these and similar precepts, compared and followed up in the connection of their design, may be deduced the most important instruction for the maintenance of that faith and that charity, which should be joined in inseparable union.

In consideration of the faith commended

* 1 Tim. ch. vi. ver. 20.

† Romans, ch. xiv. ver. 1—17. Galat. ch. v. ver. 6.

‡ 1 Tim. ch. iv. ver. 16. Theff. ch. ii. ver. 15.

§ 2 Tim. ch. i. ver. 13.

|| Titus, ch. iii. ver. 10.

by

by the sacred writers, it is evident that it is represented as the object not of constrained and involuntary conviction, but of rational enquiry. The testimony which is offered to the observation of the mind, is not obtruded as a light to overpower its faculties with irresistible impression; but unfolds itself with gradual display, and increasing evidence, as it is viewed with steady and persevering examination. The understanding is invited, by alluring considerations, to liberate itself from the dominion of those passions which obstruct the exercise of the intellectual powers; is called upon to "search the Scriptures," and "to try the Spirits, whether they be of God *." Striking arguments present themselves to the most careless and uninstructed mind, and are sufficiently brought forward by the teachers and pastors whom God has provided. The Gospel beareth the stamp of the Divine seal, and commends itself to all by the conformity of its principles to the deductions of reason; but as external confirmation is sought, as retired witnesses are examined, the documents multiply, the de-

* See John, ch. v. ver. 39. Acts, ch. xvii. ver. 11. 2 Cor. ch. xiii. ver. 5. 1 Thessal. ch. v. ver. 21.

monstration

monstration strengthens. Every date that accuracy explores may contribute to substantiate the completion of prophecy; and every record which diligence revolves may corroborate that impressive evidence which is deducible from the examination of the general suffrage of works of every description; of records dispersed through different countries in different languages, and often rescued, in modern times, from privacy and neglect. Hence it is that literature and knowledge are auspicious to religion, and anxious to consecrate their services to its cause; and hence it is that those men of superficial attainments, who are "carried about" with the impulse of every variation, are found to reason rather from speculative fancy than from historical research: indulge a scepticism of conjecture; and while they acquiesce in the vague conceptions of their own mind, indolently decline, or fastidiously refuse, to institute that search which is necessary to correct error, and to instruct ignorance.

As the sedulity of enquiry is represented to be serviceable to the adoption of faith, so is the firmness of constancy deemed essential to its preservation. Aware of the crafty industry of those, who by deceiving others derive a
fancied

fancied countenance in evil ; revelation delivers injunctions, that, after having attained the full stature of manhood, we should no longer betray the fickle instability of children ; that when the whole chain of evidence, which connects the scheme of religion, has been examined in all its links, and the hopes of mankind have appeared to be suspended in pure reliance on the Divine mercy, we relinquish not such dependency for the illusions of the human fancy ; that having, after mature deliberation, “ learned, “ and been assured” of the truth, we abide by it, and attempt not to walk on the precarious waves of life with that unconfirmed faith which cannot but sink amidst the dangers that it will experience.

The examination and constancy which should influence and confirm our convictions of the general evidence and doctrines of religion, should also regulate our conduct as to the external profession of the faith, and operate in guiding us as to our resort to, and abode in, those courts in which truth appears best to flourish. A continuance in communion with any congregation in which fundamental errors sanction corrupt worship, cannot be justified by any considerations of custom, of kindred, or
of

of submission to earthly decrees. - Better were it for two or three to assemble in private sincerity; better were it to retreat to the solitary chamber, which looketh towards God's temple, though it expose us to the persecution of unrighteous men*, than to partake of the sins of those who violate the positive ordinances of God. But, on the other hand, a dereliction of any duly constituted Church, upon objections of inconsiderable moment, is a dissevering of that union which is highly acceptable to God; and a criminal act, involving a responsibility in proportion to the departure from truth, and the dissension and enmity which it must necessarily occasion †.

As the hope and expectation of union is built on the presumption of sincere enquiry, the preservation of it is with propriety considered as within the province and power of the will. Guilt is represented to associate itself to the wanderings of error, and wickedness appears to overshadow the steps which depart from truth.

* Dan. ch. vi. ver. 10.

† Unity in the Church, says Thorndyke, is of so great advantage to the service of God, that it ought to overshadow and cover very great imperfections in the laws of the Church. See Preface to Epilogue.

With

With design to enforce the application of these momentous considerations, we shall endeavour, in the conclusion of our general subject, to demonstrate the following propositions. First, that as far as respects our immediate conduct, the preservation of the unity of the faith will be most effectually consulted by an adherence to the fundamental principles which appear to have been adopted by our Church, upon the most deliberate regard to experience, the interests of religion, and the welfare of society; and secondly, that while it is the duty of all classes of men to promote such further regulations as shall be proved to be clearly expedient and favourable to the advancement of Christianity, a strict attention should be paid to the maintenance of that peace and harmony which result from observance of the charitable lessons of revelation.

In consideration of the subjects which have passed in review before us in the successive parts of our continued disquisition, it has appeared, it is presumed, with sufficient, though imperfect illustration, that the Church of England has not only been reformed from those abuses which for many ages disparaged the fame, and obstructed the effects of Christianity,

tianity, but that it has been established, as to its main pillars, on principles essential to the character, and favourable to the impressions, of religion.

The excellency of those principles must always be estimated by a reference to the evils from which they delivered us; and with regard to passions which are ever ready to renew their mischief, and to convert the Eden, which God hath planted, into a scene of condemnation and conscious disobedience. For this reason it was judged necessary to dilate with full, though not exaggerated description, on the excessive growth and gigantic stature of that spiritual tyranny which was destroyed by the first spear of the Reformers*; and those who will revert to the
causes

* It is expedient sometimes to revive the memory of the real character of the papal usurpations, since the present advocates for the supremacy endeavour to represent its most extravagant pretensions to have been grounded on reasonable and salutary principles. Thus Mr. Robert Plowden asserts, that the deposing power of the Pope was founded on an agreement between all Christian people, to have their government settled by the arbitration of the Pope; and that whenever disputes arose concerning the rights and interests of religion, the sovereign, who was deposed, was bound to submit to the sentence, in consequence of a supposed compact between the governor and governed, to abide by the terms which the arbitrator should fix. Such fictitious agreements and imaginary compacts might exist in the ambitious schemes of the Papal policy;

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but

causes which conspired to the rise and increase of that dominion of superstition, which is happily passed away, will be convinced that the principles, which in summary recapitulation we shall state, cannot be deserted without the hazard of incalculable evils.

A departure from the great and primary principle, approved by our Reformers, as to the separate authority of every national Church, and voluntary return of any Protestant congregation to subjection to a foreign jurisdiction, is little to be apprehended. A further establishment of the principle may, indeed, on reasonable grounds of confidence, be expected; and the unheeded voice, which still preserves the title, and repeats the claim of universal pastorship*, while the circle of the supremacy seems fast contracting to the verge of a wretched territory, but echoes the expiring pretensions of an antichristian vanity; and intimates the destined completion of those pre-

but the right of interference of the Pope, as umpire in temporal concerns between the sovereign and his subjects, was never admitted by independent states, excepting under the pressure of dire necessity; though indeed tyrants and rebels occasionally availed themselves of it, to sanctify oppression and revolt. See Letter on Theological Inaccuracy, p. 97.

* *Licet immerito pastoris universalis.* Letters from Rome, printed by J. P. Coghlan, in 1794.

dictions

dictions which directed their infallible threats against the ambition that should “ oppose “ and exalt itself above all that is called “ God, or that is worshipped.”

In this country some of those, who are among the most respectable descendants of its ancient advocates, have not only abjured its temporal and deposing powers, but have at length considered themselves as enfranchised from its spiritual dominion; asserting “ the proper and independent jurisdiction of “ separate dioceses*,” their inherent authority of appointing their own bishops†, uncontrollable by, and requiring not the confirmation of a distant pontiff; the right of every Church “ to deliver its own belief, and traditions, and maxims;” and vindicating every other essential privilege, compatible with such faint and indistinct reverence as they still profess to the titular pre-eminence of an ancient see. Such have also, at the same time, advanced towards other principles of the Re-

* See State and Behaviour of English Catholics, p. 153.

† The right which some of the Cisalpine Romanists claim of electing their own bishops, when not supported by an establishment, is consistent with primitive precedent. Where the civil power confers or ratifies the endowment, it is reasonable that it should nominate the person; whether by Congrégation, or any other form, is of little importance.

formation, in contending for the general use of the Scriptures in the vulgar language *; in considering them as the test and criterion of all human pretensions; in discriminating between the authority of the canonical and the apocryphal books; in correcting the corruptions of the Vulgate; in disallowing the existence of an unerring authority of interpretation †; in admitting the propriety of a public service in the language of the people; in disclaiming the Canons of the Council of Trent, at least as to discipline ‡, and in confessing that they have discovered in their Church, a departure from primitive simplicity, and abuses in vulgar practice; in acknowledging the validity of the ordinations of our Church †; and in intimating the distrust of the grounds on which the celibacy of the priesthood was imposed.

* By the 4th rule of the Index of Pius the Fourth, the reading of the Scriptures in translation, unless permission were obtained, was forbidden; and in Clement the Eighth's edition of this Index, bishops and inquisitors were deprived of the power to grant a licence either to read or retain Bibles in the vulgar tongue. See Dr. Geddes's Letter to the Rev. John Douglas.

† Berington's Reflections to the Rev. John Hawkins. Sir John Throckmorton's Letter to the Catholic Clergy.

‡ See Geddes's Letter to the Rev. John Douglas; in which the learned writer confesses that he should have no scruple in acknowledging the jurisdiction of the English bishops, and in communicating with them, p. 35.

These

• These concessions should not pass unnoticed; and we may hope, that, as the sure and silent conviction of truth shall further prevail over the prejudice of early impressions, a nearer approximation may be witnessed in those, who, as they shall dispassionately investigate the chief decisions of our Church, will find them sanctioned in proportion as the exclusive authority of revelation shall triumph over the exploded infallibility of human decrees, and the discordant reports of jarring traditions.

If, in tracing the operation of truth, we cannot be gratified with the same effects, where the ties of established connection with a foreign and usurped authority still subsist; and are compelled to contemplate many who “seeing, see not, and hearing, will not hear,” who persist in the indiscriminate vindication of every error, and, under the sanction of the Papal example* and authority, still retain the language

• No considerations can induce the policy of Rome to mitigate its injurious statements, or forego its representations of our Church as heretical. In a Letter, addressed Nov. 21, 1792, to the archbishops, bishops, abbots, abbeſſes, chapters, and clergy of Germany, on the subject of the emigrant French clergy, are the following remarkable words, of invidious distinction. “Nos certe maximâ laude cumulare debemus non solum principes, pastores, et populos Catholicos, qui per evangelium edocti

language of ancient hostility against our Church, and withhold a testimony to its unrefuted claims *; it should lead us certainly, while we plead for the fullest toleration consistent with the security of the establishment, and applaud the generous policy of the legislature which consents to accept of such pledges of civil allegiance as are framed with indulgent deference to every conscien-

“ *et veræ charitatis spiritu inflammati*, hos benigne exceperunt
 “ fidei confessores, eosque impensâ suâ alendos sumptuerunt; sed
 “ principes etiam et *populos acatholicos*, et in his præsertim Mag-
 “ næ Britannæ Regem illustrem, et inclytam illius regni natio-
 “ nem, qui omnes erga sui similes *ducti quodam spiritu humani-*
 “ *tatis*, ut ait S. Ambrosius, iisdem subsidia suppeditarunt, *emu-*
 “ *lantes gloriam antiquorum Romanorum*, apud quos videbatur
 “ valde decorum patere domos hominum illustrium hospitibus
 “ illustribus.” The words are extracted, in repetition, in a letter, written September 17, 1794, to the Bishop of Leon. See Letters from Rome. Throughout the Epistles, the word *humanitas* is employed to describe the benevolence of the English nation; while *pietas* and *charitas* are represented as the pure sources of the German charity. Such then is still, on such an occasion, the spirit of the Roman councils!

* Notwithstanding the validity of the English ordinations is admitted by some writers of the Romish Church, it is still denied by most of its members; and even by some who have relaxed in other points, but are unwilling to allow our Church to be a true Church, and who persist also in charging us with heresy. “ *Crimen ita grave* (says Jewell) *ut nisi videatur, nisi palpetur, nisi manibus digitisque teneatur, credi facile de homine Christiano non debeat. Est enim hæresis destitutio salutis, abjectio gratiæ Dei, discessio a corpore et spiritu Christi.*” See Apol. and Berington’s Address to the Protestant Dissenters, printed by Swinney, Birmingham.

tious

tious scruple *, still vigilantly to expose the tendency of any opinions that militate against professions † of duty, and betray somewhat of unaltered attachment to dangerous principles ‡.

As

* The oath required by 31st of his present Majesty, and taken by most of the Roman Catholics, is contrived to remove all the objections which were reasonably urged by the advocates for the spiritual authority of the Pope against the oath of Elizabeth; who, though she did not seize the Censer, seems at first, like her predecessors, to have considered herself as invested with all the authority which the Pope had claimed in this country. It is accommodated also to relieve the scruples of those who objected to the words impious, heretical, and damnable, in later oaths.

† It is with regret that we discover many sentiments in the writings of some who have taken the oath, which appear inconsistent with the declarations of allegiance; as where we find it asserted, that no Catholic can conscientiously give his sanction to the civil establishment of any other religion than that of the Romish Church; see Letter to Francis Plowden, Esq; and where, in professing the character of a good subject, it is not thought necessary to be a better subject than the Roman Catholics were in the reign of an Elizabeth, excommunicated by the Pope, or in the reign of the Stuarts, to whom they refused allegiance. See Divine Right of Episcopacy, by the Rev. John Milner.

‡ General intimations and hints against civil establishments of religion; elaborate apologies for the ancient pretensions of the Papal usurpation; vindications of the consecration oath, according to the form of Clement VIII. which promises to defend the royalties of St. Peter, to enlarge the authority of the Pope, and to persecute, or at least to pursue heretics, and which was not only designed as an oath of fealty by some of the Popes, but is represented as such by moderate Romanists; these and similar effusions of zeal, together with some indications of subterfuge as to the oath of allegiance, which still occasionally appear in the productions of the rigid adherents to the Ultramontane principles,

As to the second subject of reflection; the considerations upon which a civil institution of religion is supported, in conformity with the design and character of a spiritual dispensation in this country, are, it is conceived, of sufficient importance to demonstrate the propriety, if not the necessity, of an establishment; which, as we have seen, is calculated to suppress that dangerous vibration of uncertain interests, which results from the universal wish to confirm the ascendancy of the faith most approved; and is contrived to furnish a competent provision for the ministry; the limitation of the powers, privileges, and revenues of which prevents unjustifiable assumption, at the same time that it precludes the temptation to any perversion of religion, in accommodation to secular views*.

The spiritual rights of the priesthood must continue to be revered, wherever a regard is paid to the claims of a Divine commission,

principles, are not calculated to suppress those suspicions which are at all times, perhaps, too ready to break forth, and which have been revived of late by a jealousy of some prominent circumstances, and noticeable industry in this country.

* The clergy of a well-constituted establishment cannot exceed the bounds marked out by the civil power; but where men are to subsist, and rise by ingenuity, even religion will be employed in subserviency to human contrivance.

and

and the essential constitution of the Christian Church.

The fallibility of all human judgment, and the exclusive title of revelation to direct the faith of mankind, are also principles which cannot be rejected, without detriment to, or destruction of, the interests of religion. By the neglect of these great and simple truths, the abuses of the Roman Church were introduced; and our separation from its communion rendered necessary. Where they shall be respected, sincerity of faith will be renewed, and corruptions of doctrine and worship disappear; and the Catholic Church, however partaking of earthly defects, will exhibit a renewed splendour, in which the Almighty may "take pleasure, and be glorified," as in an house in which "the silver and the gold "shall be the Lord's *;" in which an united Trinity shall with undivided attention be adored, and essential sacraments, with restricted veneration, be observed; on which the Lord shall bestow peace, the effect of unity, and the reward of fidelity and attachment.

Waving farther retrospect, as engaged only in the examination of the leading principles

* Haggai, ch. ii. ver. 6—9.

of our Church; and presuming that the characteristic doctrines of its faith, which we have had occasion in cursory representation to state, have been sufficiently vindicated by different writers, to justify our consideration of them as essential to the interests of religion, we shall proceed to the second subject of discussion; under which it is proposed to shew, that, while it is the duty of all classes of men to promote such farther regulations, as shall be proved to be clearly expedient and favourable to the advancement of Christianity, a strict attention should be paid to the conservation of that peace and harmony which result from observance of its charitable lessons.

The importance and beneficial tendency of those remedial measures, which were the effect of a temperate spirit of Reformation, cannot be traced without leading the attention to the approval of a constant care and vigilance for such renovation and improvement of external appointments, as may be judged salutary and expedient.

The propriety of “the putting away” of such evils as shall appear in any considerable degree to counteract the influence of religion, and to be capable of removal without manifest injury

injury or hazard to constitutions already sealed and confirmed as permanent and universal, is a principle perfectly consistent with the spirit of our Church, which in its human authority claims no irreversible decision, and enacts no unchangeable decrees; and which indeed hath ratified the maxim of "keeping the mean;" as to public institutions and ordinances, "between the two extremes of too much stiffness in refusing, and of too much easiness in admitting any variation from it*;" desirous of giving lasting solidity to its establishment, by improving its excellencies, and by perfecting its defective parts.

This maxim, which the wisdom of our Church has sanctioned, is discountenanced, in its restricted and defined extent, by none who look with sincerity to the advancement of religion.

That different sentiments should be entertained, as to the description of what constitutes remediable defects, and as to the advantage of change, where extensive consequences are concerned, must be expected, from the discordancy of human opinions; and from the more enlarged or confined views which are

* Preface to Common Prayer.

taken

taken with regard to the expediency and probable effect of those measures which are to derange settled systems. If, where present interests are concerned, some reluctance to listen, even to reasonable propositions, may be suspected to bias the judgment, without imputation, beyond what must attach from the general operation of human feelings, it is uncandid and unjust to impeach the sincerity of convictions expressed on points, to which considerations of interest do not extend. The loose and invidious charge which is often intimated against the members of our establishment, of an indisposition to measures of farther reformation, however advisable and salutary, is harsh and unmerited. An unwillingness to assent to the vague and captious objections of those, whose complaints indicate the lust of change, and the malevolence of indiscriminating hatred, they may indeed be supposed to feel; and it is reasonable that they should scrutinize with a jealous eye, and shrink with cautious apprehension from those projects of undefined reform, which are ever fraught with mischief to society; which provide no remedies for the grievances invidiously detailed; which betray only personal feelings and interested views, and seem to conspire

spire to the destruction, rather than to the amendment of existing constitutions. They cannot but observe, that much of the clamour for improvement, which is often raised but to invigorate the representations of discontent, is founded on fallacious and partial statement, and on a consideration of those evils, which no change but that of human depravity could totally eradicate. They perceive that false conclusions are often drawn from reflection, on the want of apparent effects of Christianity, on the lives and manners of men, because ever unwilling to trace evils to their own disaffection to religious duties, and to discern the source to which reformation should direct its first attention, many are desirous that the inefficacy of instruction, of which there is complaint, should be ascribed to injudicious regulations in the Church; and it should in justice be remembered, that whatever defects, real or imaginary, may be attributed to its appointments, they prevent not the uncorrupted communication of revealed truth; the constant and emphatical teaching of that wisdom, which every where "crieth aloud and uttereth her voice." Still, however, it is a censure as unsupported by fact, as by any ground of credible accusation,

tion, which represents the professed advocates of truth, as dazzled by any new discovery of its principles * ; and as disinclined to unite in any rational and seasonable proposition for the remedy of specific grievances, or for the promotion of objects which can be proved likely to facilitate the design of religion ; however they may be unwilling to tamper with rude and speculative innovation on a work which with “ great labour was fashioned †,” and however they may be desirous that every alteration, of long-approved appointments, should originate, as did the reformation, with those, whom due authority, and fidelity of attachment, may restrain from injuring a structure of unequalled excellence ‡.

The temporal interests of the clergy are not implicated, as were those of the Romish Church, in the maintenance of any tenet or ordinance, the removal of which might be considered as favourable to the diffusion of truth, and calculated to advance agreement of opinion. Many among them have

* See Gibbon's posthumous Memoirs.

† 2 Esdras, ch. viii. ver. 14.

* Three things are necessary to make a public reformation lawful, says Bishop Bramhall—just grounds, due moderation, sufficient authority. Schism, p. 114.

earnestly

earnestly laboured to promote a revival of the Liturgy, and a correction of the established version of the Scriptures: and the opposition of those who discourage these designs, should in candour be allowed to be conscientious and disinterested; to proceed from a conviction that the particulars, which are alledged to require alteration, are too inconsiderable to justify a revival of those controversies, which appear to have raged with violence in proportion as they have been barren and unimportant; and that the advantages which could result from the amendment of slight defects would not counterbalance the mischief which would accrue from unsettling the minds of those, who are satisfied with the general excellency of these great works.

The discreet and temperate alterations of the Liturgy, which many eminent members of our Church have approved *, and which, while they led to a removal of blemishes,

* The last review of the Liturgy, as it now stands, was made in 1661. In 1689 a commission was issued for a farther review, in conformity with the articles transmitted to Convocation by Archbishop Sancroft, and the advice of Tillotson. The ten bishops, and twenty other divines, who prepared a draft of the work, agreed in twenty points, some of which at least deserved great regard; and it is to be lamented that the design, and also some subsequent attempts, entirely failed.

prejudiced

prejudiced none of those doctrines which are often interwoven with addresses to the Deity; and are designed to direct attention to those attributes of the Divine nature, and those objects of faith, which impress the mind with a conviction of truth, and animate religious affections, would probably ere this time have been adopted, had not the agitation of the subject, been found to generate among those, who have shewn no disposition to use even its unexceptionable parts, the requisition of such unqualified alterations as could not be conceded without relinquishment of essential points.

With respect to the correction of such passages of the established version of the Scriptures, as by general consent should be allowed to be erroneous, it is probable, that, as it has been strenuously recommended, so, it will be chiefly accomplished by the clergy, whenever it shall be judged expedient. Conscious that the renderings which might be improved, require amendment rather from consideration of the scrupulous fidelity due to every line of Divine instruction, than from any great importance in the misconstructions; and sensible that every caution must be necessary to guard against the strained and partial interpretations

tions of prejudice, they pause at the difficulties and moment of such an undertaking; while many of them have, by admirable translations of individual books, furnished the noblest proofs of their zeal for religion and sacred literature; and though their works would not, it appears, as to their general style and structure, reconcile us to a departure from the uniform and majestic simplicity of the established version, have deserved the highest praise for fidelity of interpretation and spirit of composition; while feebleness of efforts have only served to prove the dishonest arts and presumptuous vanity of individuals, and the difficulty of finding men who might compose an assembly worthy to review the work which now we reverence, and to weigh, with comprehensive and impartial accuracy, the propriety of every change.

If it were judged proper, that the clergy should again assemble to effectual purposes in Convocation, it is probable, that those projects might be deliberately considered and matured; and that, in the legitimate exercise of ecclesiastical authority, some explanatory emendation of such points of profession as have been misconceived or misrepresented, and some modification of particulars, of external and

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variable

variable regimen, might be adopted, and obtain the concurrence of the civil power: and it could not but be a subject of rational and temperate exultation, if the representative council were at least occasionally restored to the exercise of its constitutional functions; to provide, under corrected impressions, for the government of the Church, to prevent any insensible accretion of abuses, and to preserve and renovate, from time to time, the integrity of its institutions.

In every constitution, however, it is more easy to discover blemishes * than to point out the mode by which they may be rectified; and he who is so engrossed by partial defects as to undervalue the great and peculiar advantages of our establishment, must be little conversant with the obstacles and impediments which operate to the prejudice of religion in every other country. The advocates for the establishment vindicate it, not as free from all imperfections, but as pre-eminently

* The chief evils which are to be lamented under our establishment, are the impoverishment of the laborious stations of the Church, by alienations and corrupt agreements; the exemption of peculiar districts from regular jurisdiction; the erection of Chapels for private speculation and management, and the simoniacal disposal of preferment. Those who will encounter political struggles for the reformation of these abuses, will experience little opposition from the clergy.

entitled

entitled to reverence, from the unexceptionable principles upon which its chief foundations rest ; and as requiring no change which would justify any risk of injury to a work, so admirable in its general character.

Desirous as its members are for the promotion of that union which results from the conformity of a common faith, and the convention of a common worship, it cannot be by the sacrifice of essential principles ; and those who, no longer dissenting from our Church on trivial grounds of distinction, reject either the doctrines which we esteem necessary to a saving faith * ; or the form of discipline which we consider as most conducive to good government, as well as most agreeable to primitive appointments, we can hope to gain only by conciliatory persuasion and sound reasoning, which cannot be controverted. Truth, fully canvassed, finally must

* The proper godhead of Christ is certainly admitted by a considerable part of the Dissenters. We are concerned, however, to notice a declension from the doctrine of the Trinity in many of the Calvinistical congregations ; and that even Dr. Watts's Psalms and Hymns, which had been so long approved in them, and the use of which is alledged by Mr. Best to prove the orthodoxy of his party in this respect, have now, in some places, been superseded by a collection of Dr. Kippis, Rees, Jervis, and Morgan ; from which some passages favourable to the doctrine have been expunged.

triumph ; if not by direct advancement, yet by imperceptible intermixture and gradual ascendancy. It is often adopted without acknowledgment, and incorporates itself with systems most adverse to its encouragement.

Convinced, however, that unity of sentiment, simplified to the exact consistency of truth in every point, cannot be expected, while prejudice and passion shall continue to darken the understanding, and mislead the judgment of men, it imports us, by “ bearing with the “ infirmities of the weak,” to look with indulgence on every variety of colour that may be blended in the purity of the faith ; solicitous chiefly to discourage that pride, which engendereth strifes and contentions, that exclude from the kingdom of heaven * ; and which seduceth to separation, destructive of that fabric of which the architecture is union. The time is indeed come when many “ will “ not endure sound doctrine, but, after their “ own lust, heap to themselves teachers.” It concerns us, therefore, “ to make full proof “ of our ministry,” “ to preach with earnestness the Word, to be instant in season and

* Gal. ch. v. ver. 19—21. 2 Peter, ch. ii. ver. 1. Baxter’s Epist. to separate Congregations.

“ out

- “ out of season, to reprove, to rebuke, to exhort with all long-suffering and doctrine *.”

Especial animation is requisite to discountenance that presumptuous spirit, which, trampling on revealed wisdom, seeketh to shed a fictitious grace on the forms of human error; which in its wildest follies assumes the port of superior instruction, and the tone of improved philosophy; which conveys, in indirect allusion, what it presumes not, in positive assertion, to expose to refutation; which with popular argument, and not seldom with captivating eloquence, affects to plead the right of that reason, of which it violates the maxims and disregards the laws. In such animation the present age has been sometimes represented as deficient. The errors of former times were rather those of excess, than of want of zeal. When corrupt design laboured to profit by the credulity of mankind, the passions of those who professed the faith were industriously inflamed in the pretended cause of religion, that they might hurry on, the career of human ambition. In a later period, when the spirit of religion recoiled from the sad effects of bigotry, the controversies excited by

* 2 Tim. ch. iv. ver. 2—5.

the Reformation kept alive the whole ardour of religious competition. No defect of energy was observed in those who assailed, or in those who defended the doctrines and institutions ratified by our Church. Religion was the theme of social converse, and the subject of heartfelt concern. Men “ talked of it when “ they sat in their houses, and when they “ walked by the way ; when they lied down, “ and when they rose up.” It was not till the heat of enmity subsided, and the eagerness of contest ceased ; till wearied by controversy, and disgusted by intolerance and hypocrisy, that the languor of indifference began to prevail : which, however shaken off by vigorous minds on great occasions, deadens the general spirit of exertion, and commends, as philosophical, that sceptical neutrality, which amidst multiplicity of opinions considers all as equally acceptable to the Supreme Being.

The establishment of the great and important truth, that no human authority can have a right to dictate its faith to others, hath too often led the modern disciples of Christianity to forget that it is still an high and momentous obligation to promote the knowledge of revealed truth ; to labour for the confirmation of union and consistency of
sentiment,

sentiment, and to endeavour, as we would save a soul from destruction, to convert him that erreth; as to avoid the vanity of profelytism to doubtful points, so to contend with anxious industry for the essential tenets of religion *. Vague and superficial is the popular notion, which, from the waverings of error, would deduce the uncertainty of truth, and represent impressions of faith as capable of variation, without offence to God, or prejudice to mankind †; since it cannot on reflection

* The reader may find some very just considerations on the subject of indifferency in matters of religion, in a work entitled, *A Treatise concerning Religion, in Refutation of the Opinion which counts all indifferent*, by Moses Amyrault, a professor of divinity, in the last century, at Saumur, who was consulted by Cardinal Richelieu on the plan of effecting a reunion between the Romish and Protestant Churches. It deserves to be noticed, that this judicious author, who wrote in the year 1660, observes, that this indifferency, which he considers as calculated to stifle all true sentiments of piety, and to banish out of the earth all mention of the name of God, began to bear great vogue in France, insomuch that a considerable number of those persons, who were esteemed the most polished for literature and courtly accomplishments, were imbued with it; and that even some, who bore the title of Divines, inclined to favour it: that the profane humour was immortal, and gathered strength every day, sprouting and enlarging to the shame of the age.

† The *reasoning* in Mr. Knight's admired poem, relating to modes of faith, as it had been attempted by Mr. Pope with so little success, might as well have been omitted; and his poetry have been satisfied with "feeding on fantastic dreams," without undermining religious principles, and weakening the motives

fection be disputed, that the religious principle which emanates from the Divine nature must be uniform and unchangeable; that if revelation be imparted, it cannot be permitted to us, to reject its laws; that devotion will be pure, as it reveres its doctrines, and morality be perfect, as it is enforced by its sanctions, and moulded on its wisdom.

If the proofs of Christianity have been amply collected, if the reasonings of former times have been centered with conspicuous and convincing demonstration, the general classes of society should be familiarized with its evidence, and impressed with more regular and systematic instruction than it must be confessed they appear to be. The luke-warm indifference, which feels no wish to promote the extension of Christian knowledge, indicates a disposition that leads to the decay of all religion, and is more offensive in the sight of God than the coldness of disbelief, or the heat of intemperate zeal*. Avowed incredulity may be satisfied with palpable and

tives of morality; the effect of which could only be, to accelerate that gloomy state of ruin which his imagination depicts.

* Revel. ch. iii. ver. 15.

convincing

convincing evidence ; the eager spirit, which even persecuteth, may be enlightened to discern its error ; but those who have heard and acknowledged a voice from heaven, who have “ seen, and felt,” and “ handled of the word of “ life,” and yet are not animated by a desire to proclaim their Lord, and to express their veneration for his cause, follow him but to violate his service, to deny or to betray him. They join in the Hosannah’s of the multitude without dignity, celebrate where their praises are not heard, and shrink and retire where their testimony would be acceptable.

An abhorrence of this cold and inanimate service, which Christ hath declared he will discard, is consistent with the most perfect moderation. Fidelity of attachment followeth in the course which is prescribed to its observance ; true zeal for religion operates by the illustration of its character. Respecting “ the end of the commandment, which is “ charity out of a pure heart, and of a good “ conscience, and of a faith unfeigned,” it perceiveth that those who take the sword but perish by its wounds, and considereth all violence as inconsistent with the Spirit, and disserviceable to the cause of religion ; as calculated but to provoke resistance, and confirm

firm obstinacy. Even asperity in debate, and sharpness in controversy, which are the only weapons of intolerance in the present day, while they betray personal feelings rather than a regard to truth, never yet have promoted its advancement. Vain is it to address the judgment, while we irritate and offend the passions. Generally, as this is confessed, the indignation excited by controversy still mingles the bitterness of resentment with the refutation of argument. The acrimony which formerly appeared in coarse and virulent abuse, now glides, it is true, under a cautious decorum. Still, however, is it equally incompatible with the genuine temper of Christianity; and the deliberate malevolence, which infuses its fruit by imperceptible drops, is more uncharitable in its preparation, and more severe in its tendency, than was the full stream of invective formerly poured out; though it circulate through veins not easily to be traced, however discernible in the general colouring and complexion of the style.

That deliberate misrepresentation should be exposed, and intentional falsehood rebuked with sharp and merited reproof, is certain; but the refutation of unintentional error, and the exposure of misguided ignorance, might
be

be often more advantageously conducted, if less of personal pride and personal animosity appeared. The period will come when the advocate of the faith will receive little praise, if it shall be found to have maintained its speculative doctrines by the violation of its moral laws. Truth is still too often disgraced by dictatorial petulance, and Christianity prejudiced in the eyes of many, by that overbearing pride, which of late years has appeared in too many of its professors; in the effusions of disgusting vanity, and in the assumption of that imperious authority, by which the individual, considering himself as it were the chief pillar of literature or of religion, dealeth out his peremptory decrees, with a contemptuous disregard of others, which no distinction of talents can excuse, no pre-eminence of learning justify*.

Labouring for truth, which is established by enquiry, and confirmed by discussion, remember we, that though it is eternal in its nature, and universal in its obligation, it can

* There will come a time, says Hooker, when three words uttered with charity and meekness shall receive a more blessed reward than three thousand volumes written with a disdainful sharpness of wit. See Preface to Eccles. Polity. No one better illustrated the spirit of charity and meekness than the incomparable writer himself.

be advanced only by gentle measures and persuasive influence.

As Christianity was first promulgated and spread abroad by humility, gentleness, exhortation, charity, so should it be promoted with temperate and conciliatory measures. Conscious that where its communications are not revered, existence is without an object, and life destitute of interest; integrity precarious, and the hope of immortality unassured; seek we to diffuse the light which is mercifully imparted to us. Believing that the chief and essential principles of religion are established as the foundation of our Church, entreat we the Almighty, that as it is built on the faith, so it may be cemented by union, and strengthened by charity; that he who "hath in all ages shewed forth his power" and mercy in its protection," will continue to defend it; that every danger which shall arise, like preceding storms, may roll away ineffective; that as it hath prospered, it may still prosper with the welfare of the country*; and that the Almighty God, who has built his Church upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ being him-

* See Prayer in the Service for the Restoration.

self the corner-stone, may grant that we also should be joined together in unity of Spirit by their doctrine, that we may be made an holy Temple, acceptable unto him, through Jesus Christ our Lord *.

* Collect to St. Simon and St. Jude.

F I N I S.

ERRATA.

- P. 17, Note *, l. 1, *after κατας add &c.*
 l. 2, *after κατας add Merc. Trif.*
P. 25, Note *, l. 10, *for Carlostadt read Carlostadt.*
P. 27, Note †, *after Boet. add Le Moyne's Letter to the Bishop of London.*
_____ Collier, Vol. II. p. ii. b. 9.
P. 29, Note, *for Eldras, ch. iv. ver. 16, read 1 Efdras, ch. iv. ver. 36—40.*
P. 50, Note *, l. 3, *instead of verse 4 read verse 7, and Matt. ch. v. ver. 40.*
P. 53, Note *, l. 8, *for mockery read monkism.*
P. 60, Note †, *for Collyer read Collier, and so passim.*
P. 63, l. 6, *for their read its.*
P. 160, l. 7, *for her read it.*
P. 187, Note *, *for Massalians read Messalians.*

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